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PURNEA.

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BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

PURNEA.

BY

L. S. S. O'MALLEY,

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE.

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PREFACE.

I DESIRE to acknowledge the great assistance I have derived from the Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in Purnea (1901--1908) by Mr. J. Byrne, I.C.S., from which much of the information contained in this volume has been reproduced.

L. S. S. O'MALLEY.

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

PURNEA DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

THE district of Purnea, which forms the north-eastern portion of the Bhāgalpur Division, is situated between 25° 15′ and 26° 35′ north latitude, and between 87° 0′ and 88° 32′ east longitude. It extends over 4,994 square miles, and has a population of 1,874,794 persons, as ascertained at the census of 1901, its area being nearly as great as that of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex combined, while it has 400,000 more inhabitants than the whole of Wales. The head-quarters are at the town of Purnea, the name of which was extended to the territory now included in the district. Purnea is an English corruption of the vernacular name Purania, and this or Puraniyā is the designation of the district in old records. Local tradition states that it is derived from the word *purain*, the local name for the lotus, which is said to have grown thickly in the neighbourhood of the town, when the Kosi river flowed past it. Another derivation which has been suggested is *pura-aranya*, meaning 'absolute forest', for tradition asserts that the district was once covered by dense forest.

The district forms part of the alluvial tract known as North Bihār, but its eastern portion more properly belongs to Bengal. It formed in fact, the northernmost *Sarkār* of that Province under Mughal rule, the river Kosi, which used to flow through the centre of Purnea, being the boundary between it and the sub-province of Bihār The population in the east and west is, moreover, ethnically and linguistically different. The Rājbansis, a characteristic caste of Northern Bengal, predominate east of the river Mahānandā, while to the west they give place to the common castes of Bihār. The Mahānandā river also forms a linguistic boundary, Hindī

being spoken to the west and a corrupt form of Bengali to the east of its course.

Boundaries. The district is bounded on the north by the Morang Zilā of Nepāl and by the Darjeeling district; on the east by the districts of Jalpāigurī, Dinājpur and Mālda; on the south by the river Ganges, which separates it from South Bhāgalpur and the Santāl Parganas; and on the west by North Bhāgalpur.

Configuration. Lying towards the eastern extremity of the Gangetic plain, and hemmed in by the Ganges on the south and the Nepāl hills on the north, the district has most of the features characteristic of a submontane alluvial tract The surface is almost a dead level, with the exception of a few tracts of undulating country on the borders of Nepāl, and a small hill of nodular limestone, called Chotāpahār, near Manihāri in the south. It is traversed by a number of rivers and streams, and is intersected to the west by numerous old beds of the Kosi river, while in the east there is a network of stagnant swamps and dried-up channels, which mark the former courses of tributaries of the Ganges.

Natural divisions. Though these are the most striking natural features common to the whole district, conditions vary considerably to the east and west. For practical purposes the district may be divided into two portions by a line drawn diagonally from the north-west to the south-east corner, the country to the east being drained by the Mahānandā and that to the west by the Kosi. In the east there is a fertile, loamy soil of alluvial deposit, which is rich in crops, chiefly rice and jute. This tract contains a number of large marshes which are never completely dry, and it is intersected by numerous rivers and natural drainage channels, by means of which nearly every part of it is accessible during the rainy season. Many of the waterways, however, have deteriorated, and are now dead or half-dead streams, which contain little or no water for the greater part of the year. The country is destitute of anything that can be called forest, but scrub jungle, in which the wild-rose tree predominates, is found in the neighbourhood of the more swampy tracts.

The western division is a sandy grass country seamed by old channels of the Kosi river, which is constantly changing its bed. It bursts down from the hills some 40 miles north of British territory, and spreading out over the plains reaches the Ganges by numerous broad, shallow, and ever shifting channels. This river does not bring down a fertilizing deposit like the Ganges, but covers the land with a thick deposit of sand during its annual inundations, and wherever it goes, it leaves behind sandy beds,

which do not admit of cultivation. The consequence is that there are few flourishing villages or substantial markets along its course, for they would be liable to be swept away or buried in sand. Another noticeable feature of this part of the district is the extent of uncultivated land, which spreads out from the vicinity of the town of Purnea, chiefly to the north and west, in the form of radiating stretches of land, opening out occasionally into fine, grassy, prairie-like plains called *rāmnās*. These afford sustenance to great herds of cattle, and towards the south, to numerous flocks of sheep. Along the Ganges there is little vegetation; but the newly-formed *chars* or alluvial islands of the Kosi are covered with a dense high jungle of coarse grass, forming the best covert in the district for wild animals. The banks of the latter river are, however, extensively cultivated in cereals, and wheat of fair quality is produced in *pargana* Dharampur, which occupies the south-west of the district. Villages are much rarer than in the east of the district, the village sites being usually in the open, and trees are less plentiful.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The river system of the district consists of three distinct parts. To the extreme west, and forming the boundary of the district on that side, runs the river Kosi, which, with its many branches, may be called the first part. The Panār or Parwan, which has its rise in the north-west corner of the district not more than 12 or 15 miles distant from the present main channel of the Kosi, and which has a south-easterly course dividing the district into two equal portions, may be said to constitute the second part. The third and last part of the river system consists of the Mahānandā, sometimes called the Mahānadī, and its tributaries.

Kosi.

By far the most important of all the rivers of Purnea is the Kosi, which is, indeed, one of the principal rivers in Bengal. It is formed by the confluence of seven streams in the east of Nepāl, in a tract called the Sapt Kosiki from its containing within its limits and having the whole of its drainage carried off by the seven branches of the Kosi. The principal branch is the San Kosi running from west to east, which is joined by the other six rivers. These are, proceeding from west to east:—(1) Bhotiā Kosi, (2) Tāmba Kosi, (3) Likkhu, (4) Dūdh Kosi. (5) Arun, and (6) Tambar. At Vārahā Kshettra or Bārah Chatrā, the river leaves the mountains in a series of cataracts and rapids, and from this point it is known as the Kosi. It first touches on British territory in the extreme north-east of the Bhāgalpur district, and after a course of few miles along the boundary between it and Purnea, enters this district a few miles north

of Anchrā Ghāt. On debouching into Purnea, it is a large river nearly a mile wide, and for the remainder of its course it exhibits all the features of a deltaic stream, running south with many bifurcations and interlacings, till it falls into the Ganges, after a course within Bengal of about 84 miles.

The general characteristics of the Kosi river in Purnea have been described by Mr. J. Inglis ("Maori") as follows:—"The main stream runs with a swift milky flood, dividing the two great indigo and rice districts of Bhāgalpur and Purnea. When swollen by the melting of the snows or by the annual rains, the river overflows its banks, and at such times presents the appearance of a broad swiftly flowing sea, for its breadth from bank to bank is often ten and in some places nearly twenty miles across. In the dry season, the waters—always of the same milky hue—are confined to innumerable channels, some so shallow that the stilted plover can wade across, and others running deep and strong with a ceaseless gurgling swish that would sweep the stateliest elephant off its feet, and carry its ponderous bulk far down the stream. These streams seem to run at random over this deltaic plain, diverging here, reuniting there, forming a wide bend in one place, and cutting direct through the sandy soil in another. The face of the country is split up into an infinitude of islands, and recticulated everywhere by a network of dry channels and shifting sandbanks; and over all, wherever there is an inch of soil, the stately elephant grass spreads its feathery mantle."*

The catchment area of the Kosi is estimated at about 23,992 square miles,† and is greater than that of any Himālayan river except the Indus and Brahmaputra. Not only is the tract it drains exceptionally large, it is also subject to a very heavy rainfall, so that the Kosi, when it debouches in the plains, delivers an enormous volume of water. In this latter portion of its course the fall of the country is comparatively small, surveys carried out for the construction of the railway to the north showing that from Anchrā Ghāt to Forbesganj, a distance of 14 miles, the fall is only 29 feet, and from Khanwā Ghāt to Nirmali, a distance of 32 miles, 46 feet. The river, therefore, debouching in a sandy, almost level, plain, finds its way southward through a number of channels. In each of these channels the bed is gradually raised by the masses of silt and sand it

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* *Tent Life in Tigerland*, 1892.

† Burrard and Hayden, *Geography and Geology of the Himalaya Mountains and Tibet*, III, 131.

brings down, and when the river is swollen by heavy rain, it cuts through the friable banks and seeks a new channel for itself, thus forming in the low-lying country a fan-shaped delta. Moreover, it receives, a few miles before its junction with the Ganges, the Gogrī river, which comes down from North Monghyr and has two large tributaries, the Tiljūgā and Bāghmati, from North Bhāgalpur. The Kosi, therefore, has to discharge not only the water it brings down from Nepāl and Purnea, but also the drainage of North Monghyr and North Bhāgalpur. The outlet for the combined volume of water is narrow, and the result is that in the rains the Kosi inundates the country near its mouth.

The last scene in the life of this great river has been picturesquely described by Sir Joseph Hooker :—"Nearly opposite, the Kosi river enters the Ganges, bearing (considering its short course) an enormous volume of water, comprising the drainage of the whole Himālaya between the two giant peaks of Kinchinjunga in Sikkim and Gosainthān in Nepāl. Even at this season the enormous expanses of sand, the numerous shifting islets, and the long spits of mud betray the proximity of some very restless and resistless power. During the rains, the scene must indeed be extraordinary, when the Kosi lays many miles of land under water, and pours so vast a quantity of detritus into the Ganges that long islets are heaped up and swept away in a few hours; and the latter river becomes all but unnavigable. Boats are caught in whirlpools, formed without a moment's warning, and sunk ere they have spun round thrice in the eddies; and no part of the inland navigation of India is so dreaded or dangerous as the Ganges at its junction with the Kosi." Even further up the course of the river, navigation is at all times of the year a matter of much difficulty, as the channels are constantly changing, new ones being yearly opened up and old ones choked by sandbanks, while the bed is full of sunken trees or snags. Moreover, owing to the great velocity of the current, boats have frequently to wait several days for a favourable wind to drive them up some of the reaches, and they require a pilot to precede them and select the channel to be followed.

The Kosi has recently been spanned by a fine railway bridge near Katihār, and is also crossed higher up by a ferry between Anchrā Ghāt and Khanwā Ghāt, both of which connect the Bengal and North-Western Railway with the Bihār section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway.

The Kosi has long had a reputation as a river of ill omen among the Mahārājās of Darbhangā, so much so that they

considered it unlucky to cross it. It is said that the founder of the Rāj received a grant of all the territory stretching from the Ganges to the hills and from the Gandak to the Kosi (*Ay Gang ta Sang, Ay Kos ta Ghos*). "For a long time", writes Mr. Byrne, "the Darbhanga Mahārājās considered it unlucky to cross the Kosi owing to this limitation, and owing to a text in one of the Purānas (*Bhaisji* 4th *Adhyaya*), which says—"In Kali Yuga the famine-stricken Brāhmans will take their children in their arms and cross the Kosi". The present Mahārājā, Sir Rameshwar Singh, has given me the following instance of the operation of this old belief. 'Rājā Bijay Gobind Singh of Pharkiyā had an only daughter, who was offered to my youngest uncle with the whole of the very considerable properties of the Rājā. My grandfather, Mahārājā Rudra Singh, refused to cross the Kosi and insisted on the bride being sent across. This resulted in the match being broken off'.* The strength of the belief may be realized from the fact that the property of Rājā Bijay Govind Singh extended over 2,000 square miles.

The Kosi is notorious, even among Bengal rivers, for its vagaries, and is remarkable for the rapidity of its stream, the dangerous and uncertain nature of its bed, and the desolation caused by its floods. Sweeping down through the hills, it brings with it volumes of sand, which it heaps over the surface of the country, destroying the productive power of the land, choking the wells, and driving the villagers from their homesteads. It takes, it is said, half a century before this sand is fit for cultivation. As an instance of the violence and destructive power of the stream, it may be mentioned that in 1875 the town of Nāthpur in the extreme north-east of Bhāgalpur close to the boundary of Purnea was completely swept away. Its site was left many miles east of the Kosi, whereas in 1850 it lay some miles west of it. In the interval of 25 years the river cut into and over-spread some 20 miles of country, turning fertile fields into arid wastes of sand, sweeping away factories, farms and villages, and changing the whole face of the country from a fruitful landscape to a wilderness of sand and swamp.† An idea of the depth of its deposits may be gathered from the fact (mentioned in the *Statistical Account of Bengal*) that an indigo factory at Tripaniyā—it should be Nipaniyā—was covered with sand up to the tops of the chimneys within four years.‡ More

* *Purnea Settlement Report (1908)*.

† The account of an eye-witness will be found in *Sport and Work on the Nepal Frontier*, by J. Inglis.

‡ *Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol. XV, p. 333.

recently the same fate has befallen the Rupauli factory; it is now buried, and only its chimneys stand above the waste of sand.

The river is also subject to sudden freshets, sometimes rising over thirty feet in twenty-four hours. It soon makes a raging torrent level from bank to bank, where only a few hours before a horse could have forded the stream without wetting the girths of the saddle. Generally, however, there is a premonitory symptom of such freshets, the water becoming of a turbid, reddish colour. This colour is distinctive of the Kosi, so much so that when the water in any channel assumes it, it may be known that the Kosi water has made its way in. Another curious feature connected with the river is that, in time of flood, moisture percolates through the sandy soil as far as 5 or 6 miles from its course, so that even at that distance the cultivator known the river is in flood by the presence of unusual moisture in the soil. It is also said that if there is a west wind for three days—a rare occurrence—the river will be sure to come down in high flood.

The river is, however, not entirely destructive. It is actively building up land, and, in fact, the whole of the western half of Purnea owes its physical characteristics to its agency. It operates in a series of beds and gradually raises the level of the whole area over which they extend, partly by heightening the beds which it occupies in succession, and partly by the action of the spill water which deposits the sediment it holds in suspension. The area in which silt is deposited is probably on an average at least 20 miles wide, while the quantity of silt deposited is estimated at 37 million tons per annum. "The Kosi", writes Captain Hirst, "has no feeders of any importance outside its catchment area, which is roughly 24,000 square miles; the river, therefore, if it is the counterpart of the Ganges and Irrawaddy, carries approximately 55 millions of tons of sediment per annum; of this amount probably not more than one-half is used in building operations. I assume, to be on the safe side, that two-thirds, or about 37 millions of tons, are deposited annually on the lands to the sides of the river; 37 millions of tons of sediment are the equivalent of 691 millions of cubic feet".*

Changes in the course of the Kosi.

Within late historic times, *i.e.*, from the beginning of the 18th century, we have evidence that the main stream of the Kosi passed below the town of Purnea and thence due south to the Ganges. Rennell's Map of 1779 shows that the main stream flowed through the centre of the Damdahā thāna; but he states in his letters, and also in a memoir in the Philosophical Transactions (Vol. LXXI, p. 87), that the Kosi had at no distant date flowed

* *The Kosi River*, J. A. S. B., September 1908.

past the station of Purnea and joined the Ganges 45 miles below its present junction. It has since worked steadily westward across some 30 miles of country, and the west of the district is full of its deserted channels. About 20 years ago it appeared to be trending eastward, and fears were expressed that it might suddenly swing back and devastate the district. The local authorities, the planters and the railway officials, severally and in combination, carried out surveys and had the river explored. A scheme was proposed for controlling it, and the whole question was considered in 1896-97 by a conference presided over by the Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department. The scheme proposed was pronounced to be of doubtful efficacy, while its cost was enormous. It was decided that no steps were feasible for controlling this great river, with its numerous channels and their wide and elevated beds, beyond building short lengths of embankments to protect isolated tracts exposed to its floods. Protective works were accordingly built near the Nepāl frontier with the object of retaining the bulk of its water in the existing channels. Since then, however, its oscillations to the north have compelled the Eastern Bengal State Railway to abandon the line between Forbesganj and Anchrā Ghāt. Of late years the river has again been showing a tendency to swing back to the east, and at present a large volume of water flows down the Damdahā Kosi; while to the west, on the border between Purnea and Bhāgalpur, the main stream winds about in a dismal swamp. Its waters are now divided between this western channel and that further east, which practically separates Damdahā thāna from thānas Korhā and Purnea.

It should be added that the name Kosi is applied to any river that contains the bulk of the Kosi water for the time being, but the channel which it adopts for its course still retains its original name, such as Hiran, Loran, etc.

Old beds of the Kosi.

There are numerous old beds of the Kosi of which a few need be noticed here, as they will be dealt with in greater detail in the appendix to this chapter. One very old bed is clearly traceable from a point a little east of Purnea railway station to Forbesganj. It runs parallel to the railway line the whole way, and the fort of Jalālgarh was built on an island in its bed. The old banks and bed of this channel are now covered with short grass, but near Kusiargāon, and a little to the north of Rānīganj, are long bare dunes formed by sand drifts. Another large river bed, some 20 miles west of Purnea, is known as the Damdahā Kosi, and another channel is the Loran about 30 miles to the west in the Bhāgalpur district.

The appearance of the old and new channels of the Kosi is described as follows by the late Mr. F. A. Shillingford:—"On approaching the banks of a newly adopted channel of the Kosi, when it has been established for a few years, its vicinity can at once be suspected by seeing forests of large trees, which had formerly been growing on the highest class of lands, their stems silted up to their forking branches, gradually dying off, and the whole country covered with sand or clay deposits as the current has been swift or slack, and most of the higher arable lands converted into jungles of tall saccharum grasses and tamarisk (*Tamarix indica*). On the other hand, a broad belt on either side of a recently deserted channel is rendered conspicuous by the absence of large trees except occurring as an oasis, spared here and there, dotting the prairie of waving grasses. When Buchanan Hamilton visited Purnea in 1807, Damdahā thāna was the most populous and prosperous division of the district to the west of, and almost untouched by, the Kosi, whilst Gondwārā thāna to the east, recently overrun by its ravages, had wild elephants roaming in its jungles. At the present time the former is just recovering from the state of being more or less a treeless tiger jungle, and the latter is the most cultivated and wooded of the three *parganas* of the Mahārājā of Darbhangā's zamīndāri of Dharampur, the exploiting ground of the Kosi in Purnea for the past century.*

Kālā Kosi. The most clearly defined of the old channels is that known as the Kālā Kosi or Karā Kosi, which still preserves, to some extent, the appearance of a river. At the same time, it is so much broken by diverging, reuniting, and interlacing channels, that it is almost impossible to determine where it begins or what is its course. It may, however, be considered to have its rise, under the name of the Kamlā, near Rānīganj in the Arāriā subdivision, whence it flows southward passing four miles to the west of the town of Purnea. The Kālā Kosi then continues its course southward near the Kolāsi and Manshai indigo factories, and falls into the Ganges one mile south of Manihāri factory nearly opposite the Sāhibganj railway station of the East Indian Railway.

Saurā. The principal tributary of the Kālā Kosi is the Saurā, which rises in some low lands to the north-west of Jalālgarh and joins it near the Pīrganj indigo factory. The town of Purnea is situated on the east bank of this river.

Mahānandā. The Mahānāndā or Mahānadī rises below the Mahaldiram hill in the Darjeeling district, and, flowing southward, forms the boundary between Purnea and Jalpāigurī for a distance of 8 miles from Phānsidewā to Titalyā. It enters the district at

* *Changes in the course of the Kosi river*, J. A. S. B., 1895.

Titalyā and flows south-west through the Kishanganj subdivision as far as Dulālganj. Near the latter place it receives the Kankai, and its waters are deflected to the south-east. It then flows through the south-east of the Purnea subdivision and enters the Mālda district a few miles south of Bārsoi. This river, like the Kosi, is liable to shift its course. Between 1880 and 1890 a new branch struck out from Nawābganj, 3 miles south of Dingra ghāt, through the villāges of Bhekaupur, Kahuākol, Himatpur and Bāgdobe to Karampur, where it rejoined the main stream. Again, from Bārsoi it broke eastwards by Pichorā, Chandpurā, Kajuu, Bānsgāon and Satuau to join the Nāgar at Lagwān. The old or western stream has silted up in many places, but is navigable by boats as far up as Kāliāganj. In the dry season, however, it is fordable above Kishanganj. Above Kāliāganj, the rapidity with which the river rises and falls, and the velocity of the current, combine to render navigation almost impossible. The most important markets on or near its banks are Kāliāganj, Kharkharī, Dulālganj and Bārsoi. At the place last named it is spanned by a railway bridge.

Tributaries of the Mahānandā. The Mahānandā receives on its left bank the following tributaries. (1) The Dānk rises in the district of Jalpāigurī and flows close to, and parallel with, the Mahānandā, down to its junction with that river near Kharkharī. (2) The Pitānu rises in the south of *pargana* Sūrjyapur, and flowing south, unites at Rānīganj with the Rāmjān. The united stream joins the Mahānandā near Sudhani. (3) The Nāgar, which forms the boundary between the districts of Purnea and Dinājpur, rises in the extreme north-east of *pargana* Sūrjyapur. It is liable to sudden floods and has a rapid current.

On its right bank the Mahānandā receives the following tributaries. (1) The Bālasan, a hill stream of about the same size as itself, which rises in the Singalīlā range to the west of the Darjeeling district. (2) Eight miles lower down it receives the Chenga, another hill stream with clear limpid water and a pebbly bed. (3) Near Kāliāganj it is joined by the Burigangi from Nepāl. (4) A little west of Kharkharī it is joined by the Mechī, a large affluent, which for some miles forms the boundary between Purnea and Nepāl. (5) About 2 miles north of Dingra Ghāt, near Dalkhola station, it is joined by the Kankai.

Kankai. The Kankai is the most important of all its tributaries, bringing down from Nepāl a volume of water greater than the Mahānandā itself. In this district it gives off on its east bank an old channel called the Marā Kankai, which presently rejoins the parent stream; and on its west bank below Kuti it receives a hill

stream called the Ratuā, which has itself two tributaries, the Luneswarī and Kāmal. The Kankai is an erratic stream, which is continually shifting its course. Twenty years ago the branches passing Danti and places to the east of that village having silted up very much, a new channel opened out from four miles west of Bahādurganj into the Kanel, both joining the Ratuā just north of Majkuri, and forming one large stream, which followed the course of the Ratuā and reunited with the main Kankai at Sisubāri or Baisāghāt. Of late years the Kankai has shifted its course from a point just above Bahādurganj and followed a new direction to the east of its old bed. In 1905, in the course of its wandering, it swept away the Sonthà bazar and deposited silt and sand over 20 more villages.

The shifting of this river is, in a great measure, due to the great body of sand brought by its floods and deposited in its channel, by which the bed is raised and the flood water made to overflow the banks and scour out new channels. From Majkuri northwards the banks are very low, being scarcely 4 or 5 feet above the bed. In a heavy flood the neighbouring country is inundated, and much sand is spread over the adjoining lands to the serious injury of their fertility.

Panār. There are several streams between the Kosi and Kankai called Panār, but the main stream is that which has its origin in the Forbesganj thāna. It is formed by the confluence of a number of hill streams rising in Nepāl, and its course is first south-east, passing by Arāriā and about 10 miles to the east of the headquarters town, and then eastwards till it joins the Mahānandā a short distance beyond the district boundary. The main stream formerly flowed south through Kadwā and Hatandā to the Ganges. Everywhere along its banks luxuriant crops of hemp (*gorsan*) are raised.

The Panār is called the Parwan or Parmau in its higher reaches. It acquires the name of Panār by the time it passes to the east of the subdivisional headquarters of Arāriā, and is still called the Panār, when it crosses the Ganges-Darjeeling road on the 40th mile from Kārāgolā. It has, however, many affluents in its downward course, several of which are indiscriminately known by the same name of Parwan. After crossing the Ganges-Darjeeling road the Panār becomes the Rājā, and it is called the Kankar when it crosses the railway. Lower down it is called the Gangajuri; and finally its old channel before joining the Ganges at Hayātpur is called the Burnadi.

Livari and Nagar. Two other rivers in the west of the district call for notice, viz., the Nagar and Livari. The former is a branch channel of

the Kosi and depends on it for its supply of water. The Livari, which is also known as the Barandi, is a river of considerable size, rising to the west of Purnea and falling into the Ganges near Kārāgolā.

LAKES AND MARSHES. There are no lakes, properly so called, in Purnea, but there are numerous marshes, especially towards the south-east. These never become entirely dry, but are reduced towards the end of the dry season to much narrower limits. The most remarkable form a long chain extending, though not continuously, from Gondwāra to Mālda. They resemble a line of broken narrow channels winding among low land, and in all probability mark the former bed of some great river.

GEOLOGY. The district is composed of alluvium, partly old alluvium and partly new Gangetic alluvium. Of the latter there is a wide belt some 30 miles broad north of the Ganges, while the sandy beds north of Purnea town appear to belong to the old group. Though very flat and low near Purnea, they rise and undulate considerably to the north, and include pebbles, which gradually increase in size as one proceeds towards the hills. The gradient of the ground, too, after passing Purnea, is at once doubled, while that of the thirty miles between Purnea and the Ganges is uniform. The junction between the old and new alluvium is, it is true, confessedly obscure, but this is the result of the sandy nature of the surface beds of the older group, which readily commingle and fuse with the newer deposits. The important fact of the gradient doubling along this line cannot be discerned by the eye, but where the *kankar* clay of the older group is in juxtaposition to the sands and silts of the newer alluvium the case is different and there is little doubt about it.*

BOTANY. In the east of the district, where the ground is not occupied by crops, it is covered by an abundant natural vegetation. Old river beds, ponds and marshes, and streams with a sluggish current have a copious vegetation of *Vallisneria* and other aquatic plants. Land subject to inundation has usually a covering of *Tamarix* and reedy grasses, and, in some parts where the ground is marshy, *Rosa involucrata* is plentiful. Few trees occur on these inundated lands, the largest and the most plentiful being *Barringtonia acutangula*. Though the district contains no forests, this part of it is well timbered, but the sandy western prairies are nearly treeless. Elsewhere, however, the villages are generally imbedded in thickets or shrubberies of semi-spontaneous and more or less useful trees. Mango groves are a common feature of

* Rec. Geol. Surv. Ind., III, 18.

the district, and varieties of the *Ficus* are also numerous. A century ago the north of the district bordering on the Tarai was described as being covered with immense woods of *sāl* and other timber, which during the rains were floated down the rivers to the ship-building yards in Calcutta.*

The district was formerly well stocked with big game. **FAUNA.** Buchanan Hamilton, writing a century ago, stated that towards the northern frontier herds of wild elephants, each numbering forty or fifty in number, made raids from Nepāl, while a few had for some years past frequented the woods in the south. A rhinoceros had lately made his appearance in the southern marshy tract, but had been shot by an indigo planter into whose premises he had "fortunately thrust himself." In the same tract there were some wild buffaloes, which were exceedingly destructive, and in the north wolves used to carry off a number of children, but had disappeared since the country was cleared. Tigers and leopards were not common, but we find that in 1788 the Collector gave an account of the ravages committed by the former in *pargana* Kadwā and reported that rewards were paid for 600 tigers per annum, though he suspected that many of the heads were brought in from the Nepāl Tarai. A clearer idea, however, of the number of wild animals found in the district may perhaps be gathered from Buchanan Hamilton's remark :—" The population seems in some places to be diminishing, for the extreme timidity and listlessness of the people has in some parts prevented them from being able to repel the encroachments of wild beasts."

Even as late as 25 or 30 years ago, Purnea had the reputation of being, if not the best, one of the best shooting districts in Bengal.† Tigers, leopards, buffaloes, hog-deer, antelope, *nilgāi* and wild pigs, as well as game birds, were common; while rhinoceros and bear could be shot in the north of the district. 'Maori', indeed, says—" Purnea and North Bhāgalpur bordering on the Terai is admittedly even in India a very sportsman's paradise, and is probably, or was at all events, the best tiger-shooting ground in the world."‡ Owing, however, to the opening up of the country, the shifting of the Kosi river, and the bringing of jungle lands under cultivation, wild animals are getting scarcer every year and are now confined to small tracts of country in different parts. Tiger, leopard, jackal, fox, three kinds of cat, hog-deer (*Cervus axis*), *nilgāi*, pig, buffalo, porcupine, hare, and

* W. Hamilton, *Description of Hindostan* (1820), I, 233.

† This account of the Fauna of Purnea has been prepared mainly from a note kindly contributed by Mr. C. D. Pyne of the Korah Factory.

‡ J. Inglis ("Maori"), *Tent Life in Tigerland*, 1892.

an occasional hyaena and wolf may, however, still be met with.

The few tigers still to be found in the district haunt the tree jungle called *katahal*, the grass jungles to the east bordering on the Mâlda district near the Kâlīganj indigo factory, and the tract just along the Nepāl frontier to the north. They stray a good deal and are occasionally heard of to the south-west on the Kosi *diāras*, to which they come from the Bhāgalpur district, and also in the *katahals* along the Ganges to the south between the Manjhai and Bahorā indigo factories. During the last 15 years a dozen or so have been shot, and quite half this number were shot in the interior, miles away from their regular haunts. Two years ago a stray tiger was shot within 7 miles of Purnea station far away from any jungle fit for cover. Regular man-eaters are unheard of.

The contrivance by which tigers in the Tarai are killed by *shikāris* is simple but effective. At two or three points near which it is probable that the tiger will pass, a split bamboo, with all the knots cut out, is placed on a rest about a foot and a half from the ground. To the end directed towards the tiger's path a strong bow is attached, the string of which, when bent, is fastened in a notch near the other end. In the hollow of the bamboo an arrow lies, which is made from some hard wood or old bamboo, well sharpened and poisoned with the juice of a plant, believed to be aconite. A long piece of firm cord is tied to the bow-string near the notch, and stretched forward across the tiger's path. As he comes along, he usually trips over the cord, thereby discharging the arrow, which generally hits him just behind the shoulder. The wound is often so severe as to be of itself fatal, but if not the poison soon causes death. For the protection of wayfarers there is a guard-string called *dharmsut*, *i.e.*, a cord stretched obliquely across the path at some distance from the bow. It is about 4 feet from the ground, so that the tiger can pass under it, but a cow or a man would strike against it.

Leopards are still fairly plentiful, and, owing to their prowling habits, are heard of from time to time in practically all parts of the district. They are much more destructive than tigers, and attack and kill cattle, ponies, dogs, young buffaloes and goats. Their principal haunts are parts of the Kishanganj and Arāriā subdivisions, along the frontier to the north, and also in the jungles to the south. Hyaenas are very rarely met with, the last heard of being seen in the north of the Kishanganj subdivision towards Titalyâ. Wolves are also scarce, but there are a few in Rānīganj thāna to the north. Jackals and foxes are numerous everywhere,

and as the district is an excellent riding country, good hunting with bobbery packs is enjoyed in the cold weather. Hog-deer are the only deer now left in Purnea. They are still found in fair numbers in the grass jungles, where these still exist, along the Kosi river banks from the northern frontier as far as the Ganges in the south, and near Forbesganj in the Arâriâ subdivision. A few are also scattered about the Korhā and Damdahā, Katihār and Manihāri thānas. The *nīlgāi* has no fixed habitat in the district, and is very scarce, only half a dozen or so being heard of within the past 4 or 5 years. Pigs are still fairly plentiful. They frequent practically the same jungles as deer, viz those adjoining *katahals* and jungly *nullahs*, and are also found in the Kishanganj subdivision. They damage crops of all kinds in the neighbourhood of the jungles and are very partial to oats. Of recent years even pigs have thinned out considerably. They are shot from pits at night by cultivators guarding their crops, and are killed off in numbers by Dhāngars and Santāls, who put up nets across regular pig runs, and forming lines drive the beasts into the nets. As soon as they are well entangled, the crowd come up and finish them off with spears and heavy sticks.

Buffaloes still exist in small numbers, the total for the district being probably under 250. They are to be found in Bhawa in Rupauli thāna and, in small stray herds of five or six, in the *katahals* along the Ganges and to the east towards Mālda. Good heads are rare, and, like the antelope, this animal will probably be extinct in the district before long, judging from the regular decrease in its numbers during the past 10 years. Porcupines are met with, but less frequently than other animals, as they burrow in inaccessible places, generally on the banks formed by the excavation of tanks covered by heavy jungle. They are particularly fond of potatoes and a few other kinds of vegetables, and are a nuisance when living near a garden. They are seldom killed, as they scarcely ever leave their burrows in the day time. Hares are found in moderate numbers on high lands near cultivation, and fair bags are obtainable by beating through crops and adjoining bushes and grasses.

The game birds that breed in the district are pea-fowl, bittern, both lesser and greater florican, partridge (black, and marsh), cotton teal, whistling teal, pink-headed duck, button quail, black ibis, goggle and golden plover, green pigeons, blue fowl and some waders. Peafowl are found in fair numbers in the eastern tracts bordering on Mālda, and a few in the *katahals* near the Ganges *diāras*, while bittern frequent the banks of marshes Game birds.

and swamps to the south of the district. The lesser florican or *lik* is rare, but is occasionally flushed on grass lands to the south. The greater florican and both varieties of partridge are seen in fair numbers; bags of half a dozen florican and of 15 or 20 brace of partridge in a day when beating for other game, are not unusual. Marsh partridge keep to the lower country and heavier cover to the east, south and west, but black partridge prefer high grass lands. Geese and whistling teal breed in old tanks and marshes. Pink-headed duck are found in the south, but rarely. The black ibis also stays in the district, and stray pairs are to be seen in all parts. Besides the above, the sarus, demoiselle crane, geese (four varieties) duck and teal (several varieties), snipe, ibis (the spoon bill and white), curlew, quail, ortolan, plovers, egrets and storks visit the district in the season. These birds start coming in late in October and remain throughout the winter, when they may be seen in all inundated parts of the country. The sarus is rare, a few pairs only being met with, but the demoiselle cranes come in great flocks giving warning of their arrival by loud trumpeting. They are seldom shot, being very shy. Of geese there are four varieties, best known as the bar-headed, grey goose, *nukta* and pink-headed. Ducks include the mallard, pintail, white eye, grey duck, tufted duck, tufted pochard, spotted bill, shoveller, shag, etc.; teal, the blue wing, etc.; snipe, the pintail, fantail, jack and painter; pigeons, a small variety like the blue rock and the bigger bird; and there are three varieties of curlew, the blue wing, grey and small grey. Quail do not arrive into the district till December, generally remaining till the end of April; they are really plentiful only in one year out of every five. Ortolan come in after the middle of March; for a couple of months or so, and in a good year, thousands are to be seen on high waste lands all over the district.

Fish. Fish are plentiful in the rivers and some of the larger tanks. The best known are the *buāli*, *rohu*, *tengrā*, *bachua*, *hilsa*, *mui*, *kanchatti*, *nana*, *kātlā* and *kālbaus*. Fresh-water sharks are found in the Ganges.

Crocodiles. The long-nosed fish-eating crocodile is found in nearly all rivers and running streams, and large numbers of the snub-nosed *mugger* in back waters and sluggish streams. Photographs have been taken of from 40 to 60 sunning themselves in quiet river bends to the south. They frequently carry off cattle and ponies, and many unwary natives have been taken by these savage brutes. Numbers are shot annually by local sportsmen, and a few have been landed on large baited hooks.

The climate of Purnea may be described as a mean between that of Bihār and that of Bengal. The rainfall begins earlier and is decidedly heavier than in the west of Bihār, but is not nearly so abundant as that of such districts as Dinājpur, Rangpur and Bogrā. Purnea is also the most eastern district that distinctly feels the dry and hot west winds so prevalent in Upper India and Bihār; but they are rare, and moisture-laden breezes from the east prevail. The year may be roughly divided into three seasons— cold, hot, and rainy. The cold weather commences in the end of October and continues till the beginning of April, thus lasting a little longer than in most parts of Bihār, and commencing somewhat earlier than in the lower deltaic districts. It is also far colder than in districts further south, hoar frost being often found in the morning. In January and February 1905 there were frosts of exceptionally severity, water exposed at night being frozen solid. The hot season, which is milder than that of either Bihār or the sea-coast districts, lasts till the middle of June. These two seasons are for Europeans as pleasant as anything they can meet with in the Lower Provinces; but they are succeeded by a season of damp and unhealthiness, which has given Purnea a very unfavourable reputation. July and August are months of heavy rain, but they are fairly cool and comparatively healthy. In September the rainfall is nearly as heavy as in the two previous months, and the atmosphere becomes surcharged with moisture. CLIMATE.

Purnea like other districts in North and East Bengal does not suffer from the extremes of temperature which are experienced further west. In the cold weather, when northerly or north-easterly winds from the Himālayan region prevail, temperature is comparatively low, mean temperature being 62° and mean minimum temperature 48° in January. After southerly winds commence in Lower Bengal, the temperature rises rapidly, the mean temperature being 75° in March and reaching 84° in May. This increase in mean temperature is due to the steady rise of night temperature. The highest mean maximum temperature is 95° in April. Temperature.

November and December are rainless, and in January and February the average rainfall is only half an inch. A steady increase of rainfall takes place in the hot weather months and is due to the southerly winds which burst almost continuously across the Bengal coast in March and April. In these months the moist air from the Bay is diverted eastward and causes numerous more or less local showers. The average fall in April is 1·6 inches and in May 5·7 inches; thunderstorms occur in these two months, Rainfall.

After the commencement of monsoon weather, heavy precipitation begins with 13 inches in June and 17·7 inches in July, while in August and September the fall is 15·8 and 12·9 inches respectively. The heavy rainfall during the monsoon months is due to the change of direction impressed upon the monsoon current by the Himālayan range. The usual direction of the moisture-laden current is northwards over East Bengal, and as it approaches the northern districts, it is not only diverted westward, but there is increased ascensional motion near the hills. It is owing to this ascensional motion chiefly that Purnea receives the heavy annual fall of 72·50 inches, more than three-fourths of which occur in the months of June to September. Rainfall is more irregular in September than in other monsoon months, and comparatively dry weather may alternate with heavy rainfall, which at times gives rise to floods. Cyclonic storms from the Bay tend to recurve towards the east at the end of the season and when this recurving is well marked, the storms generally break up over North Bengal and the adjacent Himālayas, causing very heavy rain. Northerly winds commence in October, and the cloudless weather which then sets in is occasionally broken by the approach of cyclonic storms from the Bay of Bengal, but the average rainfall in that month is only three inches.

Statistics of the rainfall at the different recording stations are given below, the figures shown being the averages recorded in each case. It is to be observed, however, that there are considerable variations from year to year above and below those averages, *e.g.*, in 1867 the fall was 115 inches and in 1904 it was 49·31 inches. Also it will be noticed that the rainfall in the north is two-thirds as great as that of the south.

STATION.	Years recorded.	November to February.	March to May.	June to October.	Annual average.
		Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.
ARARIA ...	29—30	1·11	8·09	62·36	71·56
BARSOI ...	8—9	0·50	6·16	62·99	69·65
FORBESGANJ ...	8—9	0·93	7·39	63·39	71·71
GONDWARA (KORHA)	14—16	1·23	6·76	50·47	58·46
KALIAGANJ ...	14—16	0·82	9·25	82·39	92·46
KISHANGANJ ...	29—30	1·24	8·58	69·52	79·34
PURNEA ...	29—31	1·20	6·08	57·08	64·36
Average	...	1·00	7·47	64·03	72·50

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I.

THE COURSES OF THE KOSI.

There appears to be no doubt that the Kosi formerly flowed far to the east of its present course. A century ago Dr. Buchanan Hamilton noticed the belief amongst the people, which he called 'a tradition of the vulgar,' that on reaching the plains, instead of running almost directly south to join the Ganges, as it does at present, the river formerly proceeded from Chatra to the eastward and joined the Ganges far below. "Many old channels" he wrote "are still shown by the populace as having been formerly occupied by its immense stream, and are still called Burhi, the old, or Marā, the dead Kosi. The change seems to have been very gradual, and to be in some measure still going on; nor will it be completed until the channel north from the island of Khāwaspur has become dry or dead. Even at present three or four different routes may be traced by which the river seems to have successively deserted its ancient course towards the south-east, until finally it has reached a south or straight direction."* Buchanan Hamilton also recorded the fact that "the Pandits, or natives of learning," along the banks of the Kosi alleged that "in times of remote antiquity the Kosi passed south-east by where Tājpur is now situated, and from thence towards the east until it joined the Brahmaputra, having no communication with the Ganges." He regarded this tradition as highly probable, and thought it not unlikely that the great chain of lakes and marshes north and east of Mālda were the remains of a great river bed formed by the united Kosi and Mahānandā. He also considered it probable that, on the junction of the Kosi with the Ganges, the united river opened up the wider channel known as the Padmā, within which the Ganges is still contained, and caused it to desert and leave comparatively dry the narrow channel of the Bhāgirathi.

In Sir W. W. Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal* (Vol. XV, compiled by Mr. C. J. O'Donnell) it is suggested that the

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* Montgomery Martin, *Eastern India*, III, 15.

Kosi in its eastward course first met the Karatoya, then a large river having the Atrai and Tista for its affluents. As regards its subsequent alignment, it is said:—"The bed of the river about 3 or 4 centuries ago seems to be marked by the line which divides the *parganas*, which down to the present day preserve their agricultural records under the Bengali and the *fasli* or Bihāri eras. It is well known that these systems of computation of time are founded on the Musalmān calendar, and, like it, date from the Hijrā or flight of Muhammad from Mecca. These systems came generally in use into the present district of Purneah about A.D. 1600. If the supposition be correct that the Kosi formed the boundary between the tracts in which they were in use, then the course of the river passed east of the town of Purneah, and through the police division of Manihāri before it fell into the Ganges".

The theory that the Kosi formerly flowed along the course occupied by the Karatoyā is also put forward by Mr. O'Donnell in the Bengal Census Report of 1891. He points out that the Karatoyā was once a river of the first magnitude, with a reputation for sanctity scarcely second to the Ganges, and that even as late as 1660 A. D. it is shown in Van Den Brouck's map of Bengal as a large waterway connected with the Brahmaputra. He then goes on to say—"The Karatoyā in the days of its real greatness was the bed not only of the Tista, but of the Kosi and of the numerous hill streams which now unite to form the Mahānandā. It is well known that the Kosi formed the eastern and not, as now, the western boundary of the Bihār portion of Purneah. A mermaid goddess, named Kausika,* was the tutelary deity of the Karatoya, and was worshipped all over the Matsya Desh or Land of the Fish, the earliest Hindu name of the country which lay between the Karatoyā and the old bed of the Brahmaputra to the east of Mymensingh. Her image, half woman half fish, has been found amongst the ruins of Mahāsthān."

We thus have two theories regarding the original course of the Kosi, viz., (1) that it joined the Brahmaputra and (2) that its former channel was that now occupied by the Karatoyā. There is, however, no evidence in support of the suggestion that the Kosi joined the Brahmaputra. On the contrary, the latter appears to have flowed further east, and it was separated from the Kosi by two large and broad rivers, the Karatoyā and the Mahānandā. The hypothesis that the Karatoyā was the original bed of the

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* The ancient name of the Kosi, and the name which it bears in Sanskrit works, is Kausikī.

Kosi is only less improbable for similar reasons. At the same time, in view of the known fact that the Kosi has gradually trended westward, it is quite possible that the main Kosi once joined the Mahānandā. If, however, this junction took place at all, it must have been at a remote period, for on this point, too, no historical data are available. Even in the epics, the Kausikī is mentioned distinctly as a large and powerful river; and in the *Mahābhārata* it is referred to separately from the Nandā and the Apara-nandā (the former probably the modern Mahānandā) and from the Karatoyā.* Moreover, the Cos Soanas of Arrian, which is identified with the Kosi, is said by him to be a tributary of the Ganges, and as such, it would *prima facie* have fallen into the main Ganges and not have reached it through the Mahānandā.

It may be added that in the epics the Kausikī is closely connected with the sage Viswāmitra. In the *Rāmāyana* Satyavatī, the elder sister of Viswāmitra, is said to have followed her husband, the sage Rehika, to heaven, and to have been transformed into a large river flowing from the Himālaya, on the banks of which Viswāmitra elected to stay.† In the *Mahābhārata* Viswāmitra is said to have created a deep-flowing sacred stream, named Kausikī, for the purpose of bathing; his *āsrama* or hermitage on its bank is mentioned in several lines; and there too the sage, though a Kshattriya, is said to have attained Brāhmanhood by his austere and holy life.‡ Bathing in the sacred stream at the Kausikāsrama (the hermitage of Viswāmitra) was said to be equivalent to the performance of Rājasūya Yajna, and bathing in the Kausika lake to that of an Aswamedha Yajna. Further a pilgrimage to Tāmrāruna and to the junction of the Kausikī with the Aruna and the Kalika was highly recommended.§ The names Tāmra and Aruna still survive in the modern Tambar and Arun, the easternmost tributaries of the Kosi.

The references to the Kosi in the epics are too vague to enable us to ascertain the exact position of the mouth of the river. In one passage Kausikī-kachcha, or the tract round the mouth of the Kausikī, is placed between Modāgiri (Monghyr) and the land of the Pundras; and in another chapter the *āsrama* of the sage Risyasringa, who was decoyed into Champā, the Anga capital, is placed

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* *Rāmāyana*, Kishindhyā-kānda, 40th canto, verse 20; *Mahābhārata*, Adi-parva, Adhyaya 216, Vana-parva, Adhaya 84, 110, 188, Bhisma-parva Adhaya 8.

† Adi-kānda, canto 34, verses 7-11.

‡ Adi-parva. Adhaya 71; Vana-parva, Adhaya 84, 87, 110.

§ Vana-parva, Adhaya 84.

|| Sabhā-parva, Adh. 30; Vana-parva, Adhaya 110-113; *cf.* *Rāmāyana*, Adi-kānda, cantos, 9-11.

on the river Kausikī. These references suggest the inference that the river flowed not far from Champā, *i.e.*, near Bhāgalpur, and therefore probably into the portion of the Ganges flowing past Purnea. This, taken in conjunction with Arrian's statement, leads to the conclusion that, even before the Christian era, the Kosi flowed direct into this part of the Ganges.

In the pre-Mughal histories there are some references to the Kosi, but they are few and far between. About 1209 A.D. Alī-i-Mardan, the third Mālik, crossed it on his way to take charge of Lakhnautī;* and in 1354 the Emperor Firoz Shāh of Delhi crossed it when invading Lakhnautī, which was then under Hājī Ilyas Shāh.† During this period the enormous volume of water which it poured into the Ganges appears to have produced or helped to produce very important changes in the course of the Ganges near Gaur. That river flowed first into the Kālindi, then into the 'Amerlie Nullah' and next into the 'Old Bagrully.' Subsequently it discharged its waters past Tānda, and finally in Akbar's time it flowed below Rājmahāl. As the Ganges shifted further and further westwards, it may perhaps be inferred that the Kosi also gradually moved westwards at the same time. In any case, it continued to be the western boundary of Bengal, separating it from Bihār and Tirhut. This is clear from the list of *mahāls* given by the *Ain-i-Akbari* in which *Sarkār* Purnea was included in Subah Bengal; while its *mahāls*, most of which still survive, lay east of the Kosi‡, the *mahāls* west of the river being included in *Sarkār* Monghyr. To judge from the extent of these *mahāls*, e.g., of Haveli Purnea, the river may have flowed west of Purnea town at that time, but it is not clear whether the lower portion of its course followed the Kālā Kosi or the "Old Cossy" of Rennell.

There is no definite information to show what were the courses of the Kosi in the Mughal period. Indeed, all maps older than that of Rennell are of little value as regards the country north of the Ganges, being more or less conjectural and therefore unreliable. From Rennell's Atlas (Plates V and XV) we gather the following information :—

(1) The main river, the "Cosah" or "Cossy", entered the district a little above Nāthpur, and flowing south between Bīrnagar and Purnea, fell into the Ganges, 12 miles west of Kārāgolā. The road from Purnea to Bīrnagar crossed the river at "Deema gaut," 16 miles west of Purnea town.

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* *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, Raverty, p. 578.

† Zia-ud-din Barni, Elliot, Vol. III.

‡ Jarrett, II, p. 134; J. A. S. B., 1896, pp., 90-92.

(2) The "Old Cosah" river branched off from the main stream on the east below Jagdar (18 miles north-east of Bīrnagar), flowed south-east, and, crossing the Purnea-Bīrnagar road six miles west of Purnea town, fell into the "Cossy" branch of the Ganges below Nawābganj, 14 miles east of Kārāgolā by road. The two mouths were therefore distant by road some 26 miles.

(3) The "Soraw Nullah" (the Saurā?), rising in the Morang, flowed south past Purnea, its channel being to the west of the town, and fell into the "Old Cosah" ten miles south of the town.

(4) The Ganges is shown as dividing into two branches, which flowed eastwards from Kārāgolā. The northern branch, after flowing east and then south-east near "Eckbarpur", joined the southern branch opposite Rājmahāl. The southern branch skirted the Rājmahāl Hills, as at present. The northern branch was called "Cossy R.," and the southern was known as the Ganges. This bifurcation is probably not older than Akbar's time, as the tract between the two branches, which formed *mahāl* Barhgangal (the modern Burhi-gangal) is shown in the *Ain-i-Akbarī* as attached not to Purnea, as at present, but to *Sarkār* Audambar in the south.

(5) The "Dubelly" river flowed about 10 miles east of Purnea town, and fell into the Mahānandā, while a branch of it on the west, which bore the name "Concor N.", flowed south and fell into the "Ganges-Cossy" branch below "Eckbarpur." Though the Dubelly is not shown as joining the "Cossy," its western branch is so close to the "Old Cossy" that the "Concor N." may have been one of the old channels of the "Old Cossy," before the latter began to shift further westwards. The "Concor" (Kankar), which was evidently so called from its gravelly (*kankar*) bed, was joined on the east by a branch from the Mahānandā above Hayātpur; and it is quite possible that formerly there was a connexion in this way between the Kosi and Mahānandā.

A careful examination of the history of the Kosi river was made in 1893 by the late Mr. F. A. Shillingford of Kolāsi, in a paper submitted to Government, which was subsequently published, in an amplified form, in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1895, under the title "On changes in the course of the Kosi river and the probable dangers arising from them." His conclusions—the result of 25 years' observation of the river—were:—(1) The bed of the Kosi oscillates over a vast tract of country from the Brahmaputra to near the mouth of the Gandak, the oscillations being repeated at long intervals of time. (2) The westward movement in each oscillation is slow, and in a series of steps, each of which is attended with damage to property, but

of a temporary nature. (3) The eastward movement of the oscillation will probably be accomplished in one great swing, and will be accompanied with great loss of life and property with remoter dangers of a serious nature.

The following extracts from Mr. Shillingford's pamphlet on the subject are of interest as throwing light on the history of the river. "In support of the theory advanced by Dr. Hamilton that the Kosi of remote times broke away eastward, in part along the present bed of the Parwan or Panār (this river has a variety of names in different parts of its course), through *pargana* Tājpur away through the marshes of south Dinājpur to join the Brahmaputra, we have the occurrence of large quantities of iron slag lying in patches, mostly along banks of rivers, all to the northward of this very ideal line which the river is surmised to have taken, as far, at all events, as Tājpur *pargana*. Near Forbesganj station several miles of the line are ballasted with iron slag obtained from near the banks of the Parwan. Again from a point (43rd mile-post) a little to the north of where this river crosses the Ganges and Darjeeling road for about 50 miles northward, that road is metalled with iron slag found locally; and again, where the Dinājpur section of the Assam-Bengal State Railway passes through *pargana* Tājpur, we find the line ballasted with the same iron slag from Raiganj to Rādhikāpur. This iron slag abounds in many localities, forming mounds in places, and being covered up with earth in others, but occurring only to the north of this ideal line. No indigenous iron ore being found in the district, it seems tolerably certain that it was brought down from the Nepāl mountains along such rivers as were convenient for the purpose; and appearances indicate that probably there was a barrier beyond which the traffic did not extend, or else all traces of slag from these regions have been swept away or covered up. Now what can be more natural than to suppose that such a barrier was a large river, into which flowed the streams which brought down the iron stone in addition to that carried down its own channel, and that the hillmen, who were probably the smelters, confined their operations to the safer side of the river? Then, when the Kosi flowed here, it would be in the palmy days of Gaur, whose demands for arms and iron-ware might have originated and maintained these iron-works, which, there is evidence to show, were carried on on an extensive scale.

"As far as I can follow Dr. Hunter, the original course of the river, as suggested by him, agrees in the main with that indicated by Dr. Hamilton as far as Tājpur *pargana*, but from this point the former takes it along a more northerly course into the Karatoyā,

whilst the latter takes it further south into the marshes north and east of Mālda station and thence away to the Brahmaputra. Dr. Hunter's theory seems the more likely of the two as being based on some evidence, and it will be shown below that these "great lakes north and east of Mālda" were probably formed by a subsequent movement of the Kosi. The second bed of the Kosi—and probably there were other channels occupied between this and the hypothetical course, (just described), suggested by Dr. Hunter—is supported by the evidence of the distinctive Bengali and Bihāri eras, whose line of division at the time of introduction would most probably be carried along a natural boundary such as a large river. There are numerous large deep *jhils* or extensive pools along this tract of country which seem the work of a large river. This Kosi would pass through the Kālindri, a deep and wide channel still known as the Marā Kosi, and would strike direct against the northern suburbs of Gaur, and we see numerous embankments to the north and east of this ancient city meant to keep off the floods.

"In addition to the above supposed (though highly probable) courses of the Kosi indicated by Drs. Buchanan Hamilton and W. W. Hunter, we have the following authentic channels of former Kosis known in history or in modern times, viz., beginning from the easternmost:—

"(1) The Kālī or Kārī Kosi, known in its upper reaches as the Kamlā and in Nepāl as the Kajlī or Kajrī, flowing about a mile to the west of the civil station of Purnea. The name Kālī (black or dark) as applied to this river is from the curious fact that this is the only one of the abandoned channels of the Kosi which carried dark limpid waters until 1889, when an inrush of muddy water came into it. The clearness of its waters is conspicuous also in Nepāl causing moss-like water weeds (*kajli*) to grow in the rocks and boulders in its stream: hence its name Kajlī or Kajrī in the north, the natives, as noticed by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, being unable to distinguish between the sound of the letters *l* and *r*. This was the main Kosi in 1731, forming at that time the western boundary of the district. In that year, according to Hunter, Nawāb Saif Khān of Purnea, crossed the Kosi, and by gaining the battle of Bīrnagar over Bīr Shah of that place, acquired the *parganas* of Dharampur, Gorari, Nāthpur and Dhapahar and added them to Purnea, and it is along the eastern boundaries of these very *parganas* that this river at present flows. This Kosi probably joined the Ganges near Manihāri at that time, to the east of Bhawānipur, the last village in the south-east corner of

Dharampur, through an older bed still existing joined the Kālindri at Hayātpur in Mālda.

"(2) The Damdahā Kosi, known higher up as the Pheriāni and a branch of it as the Binaniā. This is described and shown in his map as the main Kosi by Dr. B. Hamilton in 1807-11. It flowed between Deviganj station on the Assam-Bengal State Railway and Nāthpur, and to the east of Damdahā thāna and joined the Ganges near Kārāgolā. Between the Kālī and Damdahā Kosis there is another well-defined channel called in its upper reaches the Livari, and lower down the Barandi, which must have been occupied by the main Kosi waters between the years 1731 and 1807, but no record can be found of the exact years.

"(3) The Hiran, the main Kosi of the revenue survey maps of 1840-47, flowed to the west of Damdahā thāna, and about the year 1870 began to throw off branches into the Daus swamps, which became the main Kosi in 1873, and flowed into the Ganges opposite Pātharghātā.

"(4) The Daus, the main Kosi from 1873-93. In the survey maps of 1840-47 the Daus swamps in places show an outline similar to the abandoned bed of the Damdahā Kosi, shown to the eastward and marked the "old bed of the Kosi." This Kosi flowed into the Ghagrī river.

"(5) The Loran, into which the Kosi began to throw in off-shoots in 1891, has become the main Kosi since 1893 (inclusive) and still carries the bulk of its waters.

"Thus, we have the main waters of the Kosi moving from the Kālī Kosi into the Damdahā Kosi between the years 1731 to 1807, and then into the Hiran, an adjoining stream, between 1811 and 1840; and further, we have the Kosi waters occupying the Hiran for over 33 years, and the Daus for exactly 20 years. As the Kosi, in its march westward, is traversing a higher lay of country in each successive shift, it appears probable that the duration of the occupation of each new channel to the west, will go on diminishing, and that from analogy we may infer that when the easternmost channel is re-opened, or re-occupied, it will hold the Kosi waters for some considerable length of time.

"Captain Jeffreys in his report on the Gandak canals remarks:—"In Behār it is characteristic of all rivers north of the Ganges that they run on ridges of high ground." The Kosi is so conspicuous in this respect, that it admits of no affluents in the plains—in fact, its banks form as it were a watershed between the rivers of the districts of Purnea and Bhāgalpur, near whose boundary the Kosi at present flows during a good portion of its course—the rivers in the south-western half of Purnea taking

their rise from the eastern slopes and those in North Bhāgalpur mostly from the western slopes of the main Kosi banks. It seems extremely probable that all the rivers in both districts having their sources in the Kosi slopes have at one time or another formed the main stream of that river. We have seen that it has occupied all the Purnea rivers as above described, save the easternmost or the Panār, or Parwan as it is called up in the north; and it is significant that this river also in its short course through Nepalese territory is called the Burhī or Burhī Kosi, that is, the old Kosi.

"The Kosi has never been known to return eastwards to any of its deserted channels but has been steadily advancing westward, the successive leaps forming as it were a series of terraces with the slope facing east. Denudation and the products of denudation have tended towards levelling off the former "ridges" along which the main waters of the river were carried along. That the Kosi must again come eastwards will be apparent to anyone who gives the matter a moment's consideration. We know the Kosi has moved westward through a space of about 40 miles measured along the Ganges since 1731, and that it cannot go up-country much further; and the question may be asked where will the main channel of the Kosi be, say, a hundred years hence? If the Bīr Bāndh is the limit of a former westward advance, then another limit has again been nearly reached, as we have only the rivers Parwan and Talaba in Bhāgalpur as possible further streams, the sources of the Dimra and Tiljūgā being cut off from the Kosi by the Bīr Bāndh. As to the manner in which it will take place, we have the analogy of the behaviour of the Tīsta under similar conditions, and from a general aspect of the gradients in the Kosi sub-delta it would appear probable that the Kosi will go back to near the easternmost of its abandoned channels and then begin the work all over again."

The Bīr Bāndh alluded to above is, it may be explained, an earthen embankment in the north of Bhāgalpur, some 20 to 30 feet high in places, and about 50 miles long, which runs from the foot of the outer range of the Nepāl hills southwards into that district. It was constructed at the distance of about 6 to 8 miles from the western bank of the Kosi and has effectually stopped the encroachment of the river westwards. "There appears to be little doubt," wrote Mr. A. J. Hughes, Superintending Engineer, Northern Circle, in 1894 "that the object of the embankment was to cut off the spill of the Kosi from the Tiljūgā, Dimra and other rivers in the North Bhāgalpur district. The embankment has completely answered this purpose and the

denudation of the Belka hills has produced the very fertile country traversed by the Northern Bengal State Railway in North Bhāgalpur and Darbhangā, the fertility of which is in strong contrast to the country now affected by the spill of the Kosi, south of it."

Recently a further contribution to the literature on the subject has been made by Captain F. C. Hirst in a paper, "The Kosi River and some lessons to be learnt from it," published in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, September 1908. Space only permits of a brief abstract of some of the conclusions arrived at. Captain Hirst writes:—"The Kosi (old and new) has operated at different times over all the land between the debateable area along the junction of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra plains, and roughly longitude 87° east. West of that longitude and north of latitude 26° the land is tolerably high, but south of latitude 26° there is an area some 30 miles wide, which is low-lying; in this low-lying area minor channels of the main Kosi are at present busy building up most of the depressions. The sphere of action of the Kosi, then—since the Tīsta, Atrai and other rivers, before the Tīsta last returned to the Brahmaputra, apparently filled up fairly solidly everything east of longitude 88°—may be defined roughly as a rectangle made by the intersections of longitudes 87° and 88° and latitudes 25° 20′ and 26° 20′ respectively; of this area all, except on each side of longitude 87°, appears to have been dealt with by the Kosi in its older stages or by smaller streams issuing from the hills north of Purnea; the Kosi, therefore, is not likely to move appreciably either east or west of its present position. In the last 150 years the river has shifted slightly to the west, and its final point of entry into the Ganges may, I think, be safely put at less than 10 miles further west than the present Kosi bridge, the probability being that the move will be much smaller, but the final exit will not be known until the Himālayas are worn down to the approximate level of the plains. Changes must be expected, but great changes only if the river is trained by rigid embankments, which prevent it temporarily from carrying out the work upon which it is engaged, which work it will assuredly, in spite of any effort of man, eventually perform."

The writer then proceeds to describe the manner in which the Kosi builds up land and states that, for all appreciable purposes, it may be assumed that "the Kosi only has itself to depend upon to complete the forming of the ground on each side of it from the Kosi bridge to a point 10 miles above it." Basing his estimate on the analogy of the Ganges and Irrawady,

in the absence of data as to the silt-carrying capacity of the Kosi, he estimates that the latter deposits at least 37 million tons of sediment on the land on either side. He then goes on to say:—"The actual slope in the bed of the Ganges for the last 300 miles of its course, measured in a straight line, is about 6 inches per mile, a low grade even for a canal; during those 300 miles the river is by no means a tractable stream. The object of this calculation is to show what minimum period of time must elapse before the Kosi river will be as far advanced in age, in other words in want of tractability, as the lower Ganges is at the present moment. The slope of the bed of the Kosi river, measured along a straight line, is between 1 foot and 18 inches per mile. For the purposes of calculation, let us accept the former; the area on which the Kosi deposits its silt is probably on an average at least 20 miles wide; if we accept a strip of 5 miles on each side as the area on which deposition will occur, we must err on the right side in our calculation; in other words, we assume that the area to be raised is 100 miles in length and 10 miles in breadth. If from the above figures we calculate the time which must elapse for the slope of the 100 miles of the Kosi under discussion to average 6 inches per mile, we shall find that about 1,000 years is the answer to the calculation. I admit the figures I have accepted are not based on the results of observations, but, notwithstanding this, they give not uninteresting results. The period is, in all probability, much shorter than that which will actually elapse before the Kosi reaches as forward a state as the lower Ganges is in to-day. Exaggerated figures have been used in the calculation, and the depression of the plains has been entirely neglected. If the depression equals the building power of the river, matters will remain stationary until one side proceeds faster than the other. From a human point of view, therefore, if we assume that the plains are still sinking, our estimate may be multiplied, with absolute safety, by infinity."

With reference to this article, Mr. W. A. Inglis, C.S.I., formerly Chief Engineer of Bengal, writes:—* "With respect to the Kosi, I think that there will be a general agreement, by those who have had any experience of river embankments, with Captain Hirst's conclusion that the time has not yet come for any attempt to embank or to train that river, if indeed, it is, in its present state, worthy of the name of river at all. On entering the plains it flows, over rather than through, a flat lop-sided cone of sandy silt, which

* *The Rivers of Bengal*, J. A. S. B., November 1909.

it is itself depositing. The cone is lop-sided, because on the west after a short distance the land is higher, while on the east and south there is, for a considerable distance, a gradual slope of about the same gradient in either direction. In 1876, in connection with a general enquiry into the possibilities of irrigation canals from the streams of North Bihar, Colonel Haig, R. E., wrote about the tract of country between the Kamlā and the Kosi:—'The tract comprised between the two rivers mentioned is about 65 miles in width. It has a fall from north to south in its upper half at the rate of about 2 feet per mile. From west to east the ground rises from the Kamlā to the Balān, and then falls from the Balān to the Kosi. Thus the Balān, which is the central and the largest of about a dozen streams which intersect the district from north to south, runs along the summit of two great plains which slope from it downwards towards the two marginal rivers. There is a counterslope inland for a few miles from the Kosi, but little or none from the Kamlā.' The levels taken showed that the lowest low-water level of the Kosi was only 5 to 6 feet below the surface of the country. As regards alterations in the course of the stream, Colonel Haig wrote:—'At the frontier its present channel is now 2 miles to the west of what it was in 1844 when the maps were made, and further down the main stream now flows in a channel from 4 to 6 miles west of its former course.'

"Since 1876 many further changes have occurred, and the stream is unstable in the highest degree. The Kosi when in flood carries immense quantities of silt consisting largely of micaceous sand, which it spreads over the country. In 1894 it was feared that the stream was showing a tendency to leave altogether the channel in which it was at that time flowing, and to work back to some previous course much to the east, which would endanger the civil station of Purnea. In January 1895 I was deputed to examine the channels of the river at the point where it enters our territory, and for a short distance within the Nepalese territory. I quote the following from the report I made:—'The first thing that strikes one on entering Nepalese territory at Patthardewa is the enormous deposit of silt, chiefly mica sand, which has been laid over the ground in the last few years. I think I am within the mark when I say that the whole country from the frontier up to Babia has been raised two feet. I camped at Sinuari, where the huts of the village, which has been almost abandoned, were filled with sand to this extent.'

"It was most remarkable to find large areas of country on which the *sāl* trees and large cotton trees had been killed by the silt. This, in turn, is soon covered by dense grass jungle of great

height, and these jungles are well known as the homes of tigers The impression is given that the river must be engaged in cutting out for itself a channel through some former deposit of silt within the hills, and appearances give strong support to the view taken by Captain Hirst that the Kosi, as a stream of its present volume, is of very recent date, and that very many years must elapse before we can hope for even a moderately stable channel in the plains. At the same time it does not seem to be probable that the stream will make any sudden change from the general direction of its present course. I venture to quote again from my report of 1895:—'When we consider that the spill water is flowing in a much shallower channel than the main stream, and that it is much more obstructed by grass jungle, the danger which has been apprehended of a new river forming will, I think, have a less formidable aspect. A fall of 3 or 3½ feet per mile is no doubt sufficient to cause a great velocity if a stream is flowing 20 or 30 feet deep, but it is nothing very terrible if it is flowing 5 or 6 feet deep. But there is no doubt that the most important factor in the situation is the amount of silt carried. While the stream is fully charged with silt it cannot erode. The silt causes the evil of a shallow river constantly changing its course, but it seems to me also to set a limit to the extent of the change, or, at all events to tend to prevent a sudden change to a side channel. Thus, we find that proceeding along the spill from Babia and Harinagra to Pathardewa, there has been practically no erosion. The spill channels have banks, but these are entirely composed of the recent silt deposit. In going down the stream now flowing from Babia, in a small boat, we frequently grounded on the small *bunds* of rice fields, and the water was simply flowing over the country between banks of silt. It is only when we get down to Sāhebganj and Pathardewa that the erosion commences.' To allow of marginal flood banks being used with any chance of success there must be a main channel which is fairly stable or which only oscillates within moderate limits. This at present is far from being the case with the Kosi."

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

EARLY HISTORY. THE earliest inhabitants of the district are believed to have been Angas to the west and Pundras to the east. The former are generally grouped with the Bengal tribes in the epics, and formed the easternmost tribe known to the Aryans in the time of the *Atharva-samhitā*. The latter are classed among the most degraded classes of men in the *Aitareya-brāhmana*, one of the oldest Brāhmanas, which was written before 1,000 B.C.; but it is also stated that they were descendants of the sage Viswāmitra, which would seem to imply that they had Aryan blood, though degraded. This opinion survived in the epic period, for in the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivansa* the Pundras and Angas are said to be descended from the blind sage Dīrghatamas, who was born of the queen of the demon Bali; and according to the *Manu-samhitā* they sank gradually to the condition of Sūdras because they neglected the performance of sacred rites and did not consult Brāhmanas. Apparently, therefore, the Pundras were too powerful to be left out of the Aryan pale, but had rites and customs so different from those in the home of Vedic Brahmanism, that a theory of degradation was set up.

Some passages in the *Mahābhārata* (*Sabhā-parva*, *Adhyaya* 30), describing the conquests of Bhīma in Eastern India, furnish further information about the inhabitants of this part of the country. Bhīma, it is said, conquered Mahanjā king of Kausikī-kachcha, a tract lying between Modāgiri (Monghyr) and the land of the Pundras, which is thus identifiable with South Purnea. He also defeated Karna, the king of Anga, conquered the hill tribes, killed the king of Modāgiri (Monghyr) in battle, and next subdued the powerful Pundra king, Vāsudeva, who is described as the king of the Vangas, Pundras and Kirātas. The Pundra land appears to have been bounded on the east by the river Karatoyā; on the west by the modern Mahānandā, which separated it from Anga; on the south by the modern Padmā; and on the north by the hills, which were inhabited by aboriginal

hill tribes, such as the Kirātas.* Local tradition still speaks of the struggles and conquests of the Kirātas, and a Kirāta (Kirānti) woman from the Morang or Tarai is said to have been the wife of Rājā Virāt, who, according to legend, gave shelter to Yudishthira and his four Pāndava brothers during their 12 years exile. The site of his fort is still pointed out at Thākurganj in the north of the district.

At the dawn of history the district west of the Mahānandā apparently formed part, with Bhāgalpur, of the kingdom of Anga, while its eastern portion was included in Paundra-vardhana, the name now given to the land of the Pundras. Anga was an independent kingdom till the sixth century B.C., and there are traditions of war between it and Magadha. During the life-time of Buddha it was annexed by Bimbisāra, the ambitious ruler of Magadha (*circa* 519 B.C.), and it appears never to have regained its independence, the Rājā of Anga in the time of Buddha being simply a wealthy nobleman, of whom nothing is known except that he granted a pension to a Brāhman.† Thenceforward, its history is merged in that of the Magadhan empire. Paundra-vardhana also was included in that empire, the *Asokāvadāna* recording the fact that Asoka put to death many naked heretics of that country who had done despite to the Buddhist religion. In later times the district formed a part of the empire of the Imperial Guptas, which extended as early as the reign of Samudragupta (*circa* 340 A.D.) to Kāmarūpa (Assam) and Samatata (East Bengal) on the east. The Gupta empire was shattered by the invasion of the Huns, and Purnea appears to have passed into the hands of Bālāditya, king of Magadha, who in alliance with other kings, and in particular Yaso-dharman of Central India, defeated and captured the Hun king, Mihiragula.

A brief account of Paundravardhana and its people has been left by Hiuen Tsiang (Yuan-Chwang), who visited it about 640 A.D. It has a flourishing population and was studded with tanks, hospices and flowering groves. The land was low and moist with abundant crops and a genial climate.‡ In coming to this country from the west, the pilgrim had to cross the Ganges; and in going from it eastward, he had to cross a large river. The province was thus evidently bounded on the west by the Ganges with the Mahānandā, and on the east by the Karatoyā.§ The country west of the Mahānandā as far as the Gandak was

* *Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal*, J.A.S.B. (May 1908), IV. 267-70.

† T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (1903), pp. 23-24.

‡ S. Beal, *Records of the Western World*, II, 194-5.

§ *Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal*, J.A.S.B. (May 1908), IV, 271.

occupied by the Vrijjis, a confederacy of tribes, who had come in from the north many centuries before and held the tract between the Ganges and Nepāl. They were divided into several clans, and General Cunningham conjectures that Purnea may have been one of their capitals, but had long been absorbed in the Magadhan empire. According to Hiuen Tsiang, the soil of their country was rich and fertile, the climate rather cold. Its inhabitants were quick and hasty of temper, and most were heretics, but a few believed in Buddha.*

At the beginning of the seventh century the tract now included in the district seems to have been under Sasānka, the powerful king of Gauda (Gaur), who held both North and South Bihār as well as Central Bengal. He was a worshipper of Siva and hated Buddhism, which he did his best to destroy. He dug up and burnt the holy Bodhī tree at Bodh Gayā, broke the stone marked with the footprints of Buddha at Pātaliputra, destroyed the Buddhist convents, and scattered the monks, carrying his persecutions to the foot of the Nepalese hills. Harsha, the great Buddhist emperor of that century (606-647), determined to crush Sasânka, and about 620 A.D. succeeded in doing so during the course of his conquest of Northern India, in which, says Hiuen Tsiang, "he went from east to west subduing all who were not obedient; the elephants were not unharnessed, nor the soldiers unhelmeted." After the death of Harsha, his empire was dismembered; and it seems likely that Purnea became a part of the Magadha kingdom under Adityasena (*circa* 660 A.D.). From the ninth to the 12th century it was under the Pâla kings, and on their decline became subject to the Senas.

MUHAMMADAN RULE.

At the end of the 12th century the Musalmāns under Bakhtiyār Khiljī burst down upon Bengal sacking Bihâr and Nadiâ, the capitals of Bihār and Bengal. Leaving Nadiā in desolation, Bakhtiyār Khiljī removed the seat of Government to Lakhnautī (Gaur), and from that centre Ghiās-ud-dīn Iwaz (1211-26) extended the limits of the territory held by the Musalmāns. The whole of the country called Gaur, as well as Bihâr, passed under his control, and his rule was acknowledged by the surrounding tracts, including Tirhut, which all sent tribute to him. Purnea must, therefore, have come under Muhammadan rule in the first quarter of the 13th century. The north of the district seems still, however, to have been held by the hill tribes of

* S. Beal, *Records of the Western World*, II, 77-80; *Ancient Geography of India* (1871), pp. 448-8.

Nepāl; and Purnea was long regarded as an outlying province whose revenues were sufficiently burdened in protecting itself against their incursions. So little is known of the district until the 17th century that not even the names of its *faujdārs* or military governors have been recorded. It is only known that it formed the frontier *sarkār* of Muhammadan Bengal and that in the war between Sher Shāh and Humāyūn it supplied the latter with some levies.

During the Mughal rule Purnea formed a great military frontier province under the rule of a *Faujdār*, who was nominally subordinate to the Sūbahdār. In his revenue capacity of *āmildār*, he was independent of the Dīwān of Bengal and rendered no account, the greater part of Purnea being held in *jāgir* for the maintenance of himself and his troops. From the *Ain-i-Akbarī* it appears that the present district was included in *Sarkār* Tājpur east of the Mahānandā and *Sarkār* Purnea west of that river. Within its limits were also two *mahāls* of *Sarkār* Audumbar and one *mahāl* of *Sarkār* Lakhnautī in the south, all these *sarkārs* belonging to Sūbah Bengal, and west of the Kosi five *mahāls* of *Sarkār* Mungir (Monghyr) in Sūbah Bihār; while the northern strip formed a part of the then independent kingdom of Morang. The old Kosi, it should be explained, was at this time the boundary between Bengal and Bihār and continued to be the boundary till the 18th century, when the five *mahāls* of *Sarkār* Mungir were annexed to Purnea. Towards the end of the 17th century, Ostwāl Khān was appointed *Faujdār*, with the title of Nawāb, and united in his person the command of the frontier army and the fiscal duties of *āmil* or superintendent of the revenues. He was succeeded by Abdulla Khān, who was vested with similar powers. About 1680, Asfandiyār Khān became Nawāb of Purnea, and held the office for 12 years. He was succeeded by Babhaniyār Khān, who ruled until his death in 1722, when Saif Khān was appointed Governor. With him the authentic history of Purnea may be said to begin.

GOVERNORS OF PURNEA

Saif Khān.

The new governor, Saif Khān, was a nobleman of high lineage, being the grandson of Amīr Khān, a famous Governor of Kābul, and a connection of the imperial house. He was sent to Bengal by the Emperor Aurangzeb at the request of the then Nawāb of Bengal, Murshid Kuli Khān, who wished to bring this outlying portion of the province under more effective control. At that time the writ of the Mughal did not run to the west beyond the Kosi, the main stream of which seems to have flowed close to the town of Purnea and then due south into the Ganges near Kārāgolā. Beyond it lay the territory of Bīr Shāh,

Rājā of Bīrnagar, who had a force of 15,000 men and did not acknowledge the Mughal authority. To the north the boundary was not far distant from Purnea and was held by hill tribes, who waylaid and plundered all travellers who ventured to pass that way. To check their predatory raids a fort had been built at Jalālgarh and a commandant placed in charge of it. It was, in fact, a frontier fort, estimates for the fortifying and garrisoning of which, dating from about this period, are still in existence. From Jalālgarh the boundary ran eastward, passing a little north of the confluence of the Mahānandā and Kankai to the most southern point, where the present *pargana* of Sūrjyapur touches the district of Dinājpur.

The Nawāb, having obtained the services of Saif Khān, conferred upon him the office of *Faujdār* of Purnea and commandant of Jalālgarh, making him a grant of *parganas* Dharampur or Bīrnagar and Gondwārā, as well as the *mahāls* constituting the *jāgīr* of the commandant. Saif Khān soon found that their revenues were very small and complained to the Emperor. Aurangzeb then wrote to the Nawāb:—"I have sent you a caged lion. If he does not get his food, he will give you trouble." Murshid Kulī Khān took the hint, remitted all arrears of revenue, granted him other concessions befitting his rank and station, and gave him full power to consolidate his rule and extend his domains without any increase in the revenue payable to the State. Saif Khān took full advantage of the opportunity, and can soon have had little cause to complain of an empty exchequer. He overran Bīrnagar, expelled its disloyal chief, Durjan Singh, son of Bīr Shāh, and thoroughly subjugated his territory. According to Mr. J. Grant, Bīrnagar included all the lands west of the old channel of the Kosi and was annexed in 1732.* He next brought other refractory zamīndārs to book, imprisoning them and forcing them to pay revenue, so that he soon realized 18 lakhs per annum in place of the 10 or 11 lakhs previously collected, retaining the surplus under the agreement with the Nawāb. He also forced the hill tribes back to the Tarai, cleared the jungle, extended the northern frontier some 30 miles further north, and brought under cultivation the waste lands that extended to the foot of the hills. In this way, we are told, "he enlarged the country and its resources, and day by day the strength of his government, of his finances and of his army increased."†

* Fifth Report (1812, reprinted at Madras in 1883), I, 302.

† *Riyāzu-s-Salātīn*, (translation, 1904), pp. 36-7.

In all his ventures he appears to have been well supported by the Nawāb, who furnished him with troops when he wanted them. He was on terms of close friendship with the latter, in spite of the fact that he had refused to marry his grand-daughter, Nafissa Begam, because her lineage was inferior to his own: Murshid Kulī Khān was the son of a poor Brāhman, who, when a boy, was bought by a Persian merchant, who had him circumcised and educated. Every year the Nawāb invited him to spend some time at Murshidābād and would rally his guest on his ways. One of his peculiarities was the method he adopted for paying his troops, which was by giving one half of their pay in money and the other half in goods, either plundered, confiscated or bought up cheap. Another was his practice of rewarding his favourites by giving them his cast-off mistresses—a dubious favour, which earned him the sobriquet of Zen Baksh, *i.e.*, the bestower of women, instead of the more common title for a liberal man, Zer Baksh or bestower of gold.*

In 1740 Alī Vardi Khān rose in revolt, and Saif Khān, underestimating his power, and thinking that he would be supported by the imperial forces, gave out that he himself would march against him and punish his rebellion. He quickly realized his mistake, and, to cover it, counterfeited madness. Alī Vardi Khān, who knew of his powerful connections at the imperial court, was only too pleased to overlook the matter; and we find that in 1749, when Alī Vardi Khān marched to Patna to quell a revolt of the Afghāns, Saif Khān sent him a levy of 15,000 musketeers, which rendered good service in an engagement with the Marāthās at Sultānganj. On his return from Patna, Saif Khān invited Alī Vardi Khān to visit him in his own territory, where he had prepared a magnificent camp and costly presents; but this invitation was refused by the Nawāb, who was offended at Saif Khān never coming to his court at Murshidābād, though he had regularly visited his predecessors. Saif Khān, accordingly, returned to Purnea, where he died next year (1750).†

Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain Khān.

He was succeeded by his eldest son Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain Khān (also called Nawāb Bahādur), who is said to have no talents or capacity for government and to have been a bad son and a bad brother. He seized the vast treasure accumulated by his father during his thirty years of office, consisting of jewels said to be of inestimable value, as well as a large sum of money,

* Stewart's *History of Bengal* (1847), pp. 238-39.

† *Sair-ul-Mutākhārin*, I, 357; II, 47-8, 73-4; *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, pp. 36-88; C. Stewart *History of Bengal* (1847) pp. 238-39.

and also despoiled his brothers of what they had. The Nawāb, hearing of his oppressive conduct, appointed in his stead his own nephew and son-in-law, Saiyad Ahmed Khān, also called Saulat Jang *i. e.*, the impetuous in war. Saiyad Ahmed Khān set out at the head of 3,000 horse and 4,000 foot, and Fakhr-ud-dīn, realizing the hopelessness of resistance, went quietly to the Nawāb's court at Murshidābād and made his submission. Soon afterwards, during one of the Marāthā invasions, hearing an exaggerated account of a mutiny in the Bengal army, and thinking that the Nawāb's power was at an end, he escaped from Murshidābād and joined his forces, which he had left encamped on the Mahānandā. Thence he marched on to Purnea, but as soon as Saiyad Ahmed Khān advanced to meet him, he retired to Mālda. There his incapacity and cowardice soon became apparent. His troops began to desert him, and he remained inactive, until Alī Vardi Khān sent a small force, which took him and his treasure to Murshidābād, where he was kept under surveillance. In this way, says the author of the *Sair-ul-Mutākhārin*, the Nawāb "at one and the same stroke took possession of that immense heap of money and jewels that had been amassing for half a century together". Fakhr-ud-dīn eventually managed to escape again with the help of the Marāthās and made his way to Delhi, where he died soon afterwards.*

Saiyad Ahmed Khān.

Saiyad Ahmed Khān had been appointed Governor of Orissa in 1741, but had proved a failure. He alienated his troops by reducing their pay and the Oriyās by his exactions from their zamīndārs, by his dissolute manners, and by taking their women for his zanāna. The people rose in revolt, and put Saiyad Ahmed in prison, from which he was rescued by Alī Vardi Khān, who marched south to re-establish his authority. In 1749 he was made Deputy Governor of Bihār, but this appointment aroused the jealousy of Alī Vardi Khān's favourite grandson, Sirāj-ud-daula. Alī Vardi Khān was induced to install Sirāj-ud-daula in the place of Saiyad Ahmed Khān, who was then consoled by being made Governor of Purnea. In this office he did much to redeem his reputation. He gave up the depraved habits of his young days, and instead of passing his time among dancing women, he attached to his person friends distinguished for their birth, virtue or knowledge. He was careful to go through the daily round of prayers, like a good Musalmān, but at the same time he was a jovial soul, who could enjoy the fun of the Basant Panchami. Rising an hour before daybreak, he performed his devotions, and

* *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, p. 359; *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 74, 76, 78, 85.

then sat in state in the court hall. There he held a public audience twice a week, being accessible to every suitor. On Friday he abstained from all business; but on the other days of the week he devoted himself to it. His method of business was as follows. He sat in a private room, to which none were admitted but some old women of the zanāna and some trusty eunuchs. His courtiers, secretaries and heads of the different offices remained outside, sending in by an eunuch any paper requiring his signature. These papers he perused in silence, and returned when he had passed orders on them. Fair copies were then made and despatched, couriers being always ready in attendance. At 10 A.M. he had his dinner, from which he would send selected dishes to his friends. A siesta followed, then came the midday prayers and some reading of the Korān. At 3 P.M. he came into the public hall and discussed science and religion with the Maulvis for two hours. Then he gave audience to his friends for an hour, after which he spent some time with the ladies of his zanāna. At night came his fourth prayer, after which he was entertained by actresses, dancers and singers, or by hearing some curious and diverting story or tale, which lulled him to sleep; and this was at about 9 or 10 o'clock. "This rule of life," wrote the author of the *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, "held regularly the whole year round without exception. He was naturally a sweet-tempered man; and civility was so natural to him, that for full seven years, in which I have been in his service, I never remember to have heard him say a harsh word to any one (whether high or low), or to have seen him guilty of an improper action."*

As regards the character of his rule, "this prince governed for full seven years the province of Puraniā with absolute power; but yet with so much equity and attention to the welfare of the subject, that both the nobles and husbandmen were exceedingly pleased with his government, and at all times ready to give it their applause. Retired in a corner, at a distance from the great roads to and from Hindustān, he had no occasion at all either to wage war or to travel. So that his travels went no farther than Rājmahāl, whither his uncle, who was very fond of hunting, used to repair almost every year; and sometimes he proceeded as far as Murshidābād, to see his brother, Nawāzish Muhammad Khān, and his nephews and nieces, as well as the princesses of his family. Nor did he ever set out from Puraniā in a military equipage but on two occasions; the first time it

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* *Sair-ul-Mūktākharin*, II, 186.

was to oppose Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain Khān, that ill-advised son of Saif Khān's; the other, it was to chastise Sheikh Muhammed Jalīl, zamīndār of Puraniā, who enjoyed a good estate and a great revenue, but who was undone for having listened to the suggestions of senseless, ignorant friends, by whose counsels he excited troubles, proved refractory, and demolished his own welfare and family." Elsewhere we find that Muhammad Jalīl was the zamīndār of Khagrā and a staunch Shia. The expedition against him took place in the middle of the rains and was a short one, for his troops refused to stand by him. He and all his family were taken prisoners, his estate was confiscated, and he himself died in prison. His son was, however, allowed to regain the estate, in order that he might bring back the cultivators and repeople the half ruined country*."

Towards the end of his life, Saiyad Ahmed appears to have engaged in intrigues to secure possession of Bengal on the death of Alī Vardi Khān, which was daily expected, as he was an old man and had long been suffering from acute dropsy. Calculating on such a contingency, Saiyad Ahmed opened up negotiations with the Grand Vizier of the Emperor Alamgīr II for the grant of the viceroyalty of Bengal, and devoted the resources of Purnea to collecting a large army with which to oppose the claims of Sirāj-ud-daula. In 1756, however, a few months before the death of Alī Vardi Khan, Saiyad Ahmed died and was buried at Purnea in a garden called the Jāfaribāgh. He left a great treasure behind him, consisting of jewels, furniture of silver and gold, precious fabrics, camels, elephants, etc., and at least 45 lakhs in the treasury. Raymond, the translator of the *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, indeed, estimates that his property was worth over a crore and that his annual savings were over 20 lakhs. "Add to all this," he wrote, "the standing expenses for seven thousand infantry and as much cavalry, the artillery, a fleet of boats; a numerous court receiving salaries; a seraglio of five hundred women; a table, splendid; and infinity of yearly clothes and jewels; as well as a legion of pensioners that received from five to a thousand rupees per month; and this aggregate of expenses cannot be rated at less than forty lacs more; in all sixty lacs—and the translator has been assured by writers of his treasury that his revenue amounted to fifty-eight lacs. Fifty-eight lacs! Here is then a decay incredible, as being past all computation and all conjecture; for although some fifteen years ago Razi-ud-dīn Muhammad Khān used to transmit yearly from thence eleven

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 141-2.

lacs to the treasury of Murshidābād, it is certain that Purniah cannot yield now (1786) above six or seven lacs a year."

Saiyad Ahmed Khān was succeeded by his son Shaukat Jang, who had been Grand Master of Artillery at Purnea under his father and afterwards at Murshidābād under Alī Vardi Khān. The latter, it is said, recognized his succession, and in order to pacify and, if possible, buy off such a formidable claimant to the throne, bestowed on him the whole of Purnea as a revenue-free *jāgīr*. Shaukat Jang, at any rate, did not oppose the succession of his cousin, Sirāj-ud-daula, but waited for an opportunity to assert his claims. No sooner, however, had he succeeded Alī Vardi Khān than Sirāj-ud-daula determined to make his own position secure by removing this rival from his path, and with that purpose set out against Shaukat Jang in May 1756. He arrived at Rājmahāl, but got no further. His soldiers were afraid to cross the Ganges, believing that Shaukat Jang had been reinforced by the imperial troops; while his captains dissuaded him from attempting a campaign in the rains when the country would be under water. Shaukat Jang himself was taken by surprise; instead of taking the field, he begged his *mullahs* to avert invasion by their prayers, and sent a message to Sirāj-ud-daula acknowledging him as his suzerain. Sirāj-ud-daula then marched back to attack the English, his campaign ending with the massacre of the Black Hole. Shaukat Jang.

Shaukat Jang had merely temporized. The conspirators at Murshidābād under Mīr Jafar Khān, the Bakshi or Paymaster, begged him to put himself at their head, depose Sirāj-ud-daula, and rule Bengal. Shaukat Jang lent a ready ear to their suggestions. Vain and loquacious, he openly talked of his scheme and boasted that, after subduing Bengal, he would conquer Oudh and place on the throne of Delhi an emperor of his own liking. He would then march to Lahore and Kābul, and make his home at Khorāsan, as the climate of Bengal did not suit him. At this juncture, his father's intrigues bore fruit, for he received from the Grand Vizier a *pharmān* or commission authorizing him to take and rule Bengal as Viceroy, on condition that he sent to Delhi the confiscated treasure of Sirāj-ud-daula and remitted annually three crores of rupees as tribute. "On the receipt of that patent, his pride, which had already reached to the sphere of the moon, now rose to the sun's orb; and he commenced picking up quarrels with principal officers and commanders of the old court."* Most of them were dismissed or degraded; his

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 197.

officers were nearly driven into mutiny; while his soldiers were alienated by his telling them—"I am not such a fool as Alī Vardi Khān, who gave his men leave to take everything found in an enemy's camp. When I conquer Bengal, my men will not have a handful of straw beyond their pay."

News of his intentions reached Sirāj-ud-daula, who, in order that he might have some one on the spot to watch his movements, granted the *parganas* of Bīrnagar and Gondwārā to a Hindu favourite named Rās Bihāri, sending Shaukat Jang a letter to apprise him of the grant. Shaukat Jang passionately resented this interference with his authority, beat the messenger who brought the letter, and sent a characteristic reply, which he first had read out in Court. His reply was brief and to the point:—"I have received from the Imperial Court a patent of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; but as the same blood runs in your veins and mine, I will spare your life and grant you a retreat in any part of the province of Dacca you like. Retire there, and leave the palace and treasury to my officers. See that you send your answer promptly, as I await it with one foot in the stirrup." This letter was enough to enrage a less passionate man than Sirāj-ud-daula, who decided to deliver his answer at once and in person. He ordered Rājā Rām Nārāyan, the Governor of Bihār, to march on Purnea from Patna, while his own army advanced from Murshidābād, in two divisions, one of which, under his own command, marched up the right bank of the Ganges, while the other, under his Dīwān Rājā Mohan Lāl, followed the left bank of that river.

Battle of Baldiabāri.

When Shaukat Jang was informed of the advance of Sirāj-ud-daula, he ordered his officers to select a strong position for his army. Some of them, who had served under his father and were experienced soldiers, selected a position at Baldiābāri between Manihāri and Nawābganj, which could easily be defended against a superior force. In front was a chain of deep morasses, over which there was only one narrow causeway, while the country was open behind, so that supplies could easily be obtained. The advantages of the position were, however, largely sacrificed by the troops being encamped at great distances from one another; for Shaukat Jang refused to entrust the command to any one else, and did not know how to marshal the forces himself. When at length he did arrive on the field, he morosely refused to issue explicit orders to his officers, but directed them to return to their positions and there await his commands. When an old Afghān officer drew his attention to the utter disorder that prevailed, and described to him the orderly battalions which Nazām-ul-malk, the great

commander of the Deccan, led into battle, his only answer was to call that general a fool, and to say that he wanted no advice, as he had already fought three hundred battles.

While the army was waiting for his orders, Mohan Lāl's division came in sight and commenced a cannonade. The smaller guns were out of range, the shots falling into the morass, but the larger pieces commanded Shaukat Jang's camp. Seeing this, Syām Sundar, who was in charge of the artillery, with more courage than prudence, quitted the entrenchments and advanced over the causeway to reply to the enemy's fire. Shaukat Jang, thereupon, sent a message to the commander of his cavalry taunting him with his inactivity. This officer pointed out that no horse could attempt to cross the marsh and live. Shaukat Jang replied by contemptuously comparing the conduct of his Musalmān horsemen with the courage of the Hindu scribe, as he called Syām Sundar. The cavalry thus taunted determined to cross the morass at all hazards, and soon were struggling through its thick mud, while the artillery of Sirāj-ud-daula, from the other side, poured volley after volley into them. Shaukat Jang did not join them, but, having taken his usual dose of *bhāng*, retired to his tent, and amused himself with the songs and dances of his harem. While he was thus engaged, the battle went against him in all directions, his artillery being silenced and his cavalry cut to pieces.

At this critical time, some of his officers came to him, and placed him on an elephant, with a servant to support him, as he was reeling with intoxication and could not sit upright. While he was advancing, a musket ball struck him in the forehead and killed him (16th October 1756). According to one account, he met his death while trying to charge a body of troops in which he thought he saw Sirāj-ud-daula. The latter, however, did not take part in the battle, but remained in the rear, sending Mīrān, the son of Mīr Jafar Khān, dressed like himself to deceive the enemy.*

After the death of Shaukat Jang his forces made little further stand, though they appear to have given a good account of themselves, in spite of their disadvantages, one account saying that Sirāj-ud-daula had 5,000 killed and wounded.† The battle ended with the fall of night, when Shaukat Jang's forces dispersed, unpursued by the enemy, and without hindrance from the peasants of Purnea, who were not courageous enough to come down in numbers, and plunder the living or strip the dead, "as

* S. C. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, I, cvii; II, 53.

† S. C. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57* II, 54.

they do in Hindustan".* Two or three days later Sirāj-ud-daula returned in triumph to Murshidābād, appointing Mohan Lāl as Governor.

Thus miserably perished Shaukat Jang, leaving the way clear for Sirāj-ud-daula. Further, in the words of the *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*—"The rash valour of the young Nawāb of Purnea, in delivering Sirāj-ud-daula from the only enemy he had to fear in the country, made it clear to all Bengal that the English were the only power which could bring about the change that every one was longing for."

Character of Shaukat Jang.

An instructive account of his character has been given by Ghulām Husain Khān, the author of that work, who was attached to his court. He has as little good to say of him as he has of his cousin Sirāj-ud-daula, and finds in their folly the working of fate. "It having," he says, "been decreed by Providence that the guilty race of Alī Vardi Khān should be deprived of an empire that had cost so much toil in rearing, of course, it was in its designs that the three provinces of Bengal, Bihār and Orissa should be found to have for masters two young men equally proud, equally incapable, and equally cruel, Sirāj-ud-daula and Shaukat Jang." He was in a good position to judge, for he was the personal adviser of Shaukat Jang. He gives a quaint account of his duties in that capacity. "Like the Vizier (*i.e.*, the Queen) in the game of chess, I was close to a wooden King, that could neither think nor act by himself. I was obliged to read him lessons about signing papers, giving audience, and supporting a character in public. He could neither read fluently nor write legibly; so that I was obliged to be both school-master and his minister. I was obliged to direct his pen, teach him that *Aba* was written with two *as* and a *b*, and tell him how to join *a* to the next letter, and a syllable to a syllable, and how to keep his words asunder."†

In spite of his ignorance Shaukat Jang was inordinately vain. One day, for instance, on receiving a petition addressing him as *Alam Panāh* or Refuge of the World, he gave orders that that should always be his official title, and actually informed the Grand Vizier of the Emperor that, if he was addressed in any other way, he would tear the letter to shreds and give no answer. "As to his morals, although he did not seem vicious, yet he dressed and spoke like a woman; but this did not prevent him from abusing, in low and obscene language, every one whatever, without distinction,

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 214.

† Raymond's translation (reprint of 1902), II, 189, 194, 196.

and that, too, in the fullest hall of audience. . . To mention all his ridiculous and thoughtless actions would require volumes; and a pity it would be to consume ink and paper upon such a subject."* It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Shaukat Jang suffered from megalomania.

Khadim Husain Khān. Next year, after the death of Sirāj-ud-daula (July 1757), a small revolution took place at Purnea. Hāzir Alī Khān, who had been Superintendent of the Hall of Audience to Shaukat Jang, took possession of the town, imprisoned Mohan Lāl and seized the treasury. In this he was supported by Achit Singh, who had for some time held the *parganas* of Tājpur, Srīpur, Gondwārā and Kārāgolā, and was now made his Prime Minister. Both were popular with the people of Purnea, who, says the author of the *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, "are exactly the counterpart of those of Bengal, those tame, cowardly wretches, at all times so crouching and so ready to submit to any one that offers. No one will wonder at Hāzir Alī having brought into his views both the troops and inhabitants."† On receiving news of this revolt, the new Nawāb, Mīr Jafar Khān, prepared to set out to crush it, though he was reluctant to do so, as he wished to march to Patna against Rām Nārāyan, the Governor of Bihār. He, therefore, readily granted the request of Khadim Husain Khan, who, representing that he wished to "better his fortunes in the little corner of Purnea," undertook to quell the rebellion if he was made Governor. Khadim Husain Khān was no stranger to the place, for he had been in the service of Saiyad Ahmed Khān, being, indeed, sent by him to take possession of Purnea on his first appointment. He had lately distinguished himself by his brutal conduct towards the mother of Sirāj-ud daula, having her beaten off when she flung herself on the dead body of her son.

He did not find much difficulty in establishing himself in Purnea. Hāzir Alī Khān raised his levies, mostly untrained men, but, trusting in the predictions of an astrologer, made no attempt to move from his entrenchments. His troops, moreover, were afraid to face the army of about 7,000 horse and foot under Khadim Husain Khān, but deserted daily, and, when Khadim Husain Khān advanced against them, fled without striking a blow. Hāzir Alī Khān escaped to Nepāl, and in December 1757 the new Governor made his entrance, unopposed, into Purnea, where he took up his abode in the palace built by Saiyad Ahmed Khān. One of his first measures was to have the nose of the

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 208-4.

† *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 251.

astrologer cut off; he then proceeded to enrich himself by confiscating property and levying heavy contributions from the zamīndārs; and in a short time the district was brought under his complete control.

In 1759 the new Governor became embroiled with Mīrān, son of Mīr Jafar Khān, who resented his assumption of an independent position. Mīrān marched north with an English force under Clive to face the Shāhzāda (afterwards the Emperor Shāh Alam), who had invaded Bihār, and called on Khadim Husain Khān to meet him. The latter led an army southwards to Kārāgolā, and, to make himself doubly secure, obtained a guarantee of safety from Clive, as he suspected treachery on the part of Mīrān. They then had an interview in the middle of the Ganges, each being in a separate boat, and were reconciled by the mediation of Clive. The truce, however, was a hollow one, for Mīrān threatened to have Khadim Husain Khān removed from his post, while the latter withheld all payment of revenue, marched across the Ganges with a force of 6,000 men, and threatened to throw in his lot with the Shāhzāda. This threat was effectual, and he received a promise that he should remain Governor, on which he returned to Purnea.

A few months later (May 1760) he was in open revolt and made ready to join Shāh Alam. To raise troops he extorted money from all he could get in his power, whether high or low, and, before leaving Purnea, literally plundered the town and district. In this way he managed to increase his army to 6,000 cavalry, 10,000 infantry and 30 guns. He at first intended to go by river, and for that purpose collected a number of boats; but Major Caillaud, getting wind of his intention, seized them and had them burnt with the ammunition and stores on board. Khadim Husain Khān was consequently forced to march north of the Ganges to Hājīpur, where he hoped to effect a junction with the Emperor. There, however, he was attacked by Captain Knox, who marched across the river with a small force, consisting of 200 Europeans and a battalion of sepoys, which could not have exceeded 800 men, 5 field pieces and 300 of Shitāb Roy's cavalry. The Purnea troops, as they advanced, filed to the right and left, and, having completely surrounded this little band, commenced the attack. The battle lasted for six hours; column after column of cavalry charging down on the English detachment, which steadily received them with a discharge of grape or at the point of the bayonet. On one occasion the little party were nearly overwhelmed, but a brilliant charge of the grenadiers of Knox's own battalion repulsed the enemy and saved their comrades. At

length, tired of these fruitless attempts, which had been attended with considerable loss, Khadim Husain Khān was compelled to retreat, leaving behind him 400 dead on the field, three elephants and eight pieces of cannon, which fell into the hands of the victors. Not contented with this success, Captain Knox continued to follow up the retreating enemy until evening closed in upon him, capturing a number of their ammunition waggons, which he blew up on the spot. The loss of the English on this occasion was remarkably small, for only 16 Europeans were killed; the number of sepoys is not stated.*

After this reverse, Khadim Husain Khān retreated northwards into Champāran closely followed by the allied forces under Mīrān and Major Caillaud, which succeeded in making him give battle on one occasion. The battle ended in a rout, the Purnea troops losing all their artillery and being compelled to abandon their heavy baggage and a large quantity of ammunition. The pursuit, however, had to be abandoned, for one night Mīrān was killed by lightning, and Major Caillaud then determined to return. Khadim Husain Khān was thus left free to effect his escape through the Tarai to Purnea (June 1760).

LAST DAYS OF MUHAMMADAN RULE.

For three years after this we hear nothing more of the Governors of Purnea. Under Mīr Kāsim Alī the Governor was Sher Alī Khān, who, when war with the English broke out in 1763, led all his available forces to join the Nawāb at Udhuā Nullah, leaving his brother as Deputy Governor of the district. This state of affairs was taken advantage of by Rohi-ud-dīn Husain Khān, a son of Saif Khān, who was in receipt of a small salary at the Nawāb's court. Suspecting that the Nawāb's downfall was certain, he left Monghyr in an old leaky boat and made his way to Purnea. Arriving there at dead of night, he made himself known to Mehdi Beg, his father's old *Maulvi*, and then went down the Saurā river, where he kept himself and his boat concealed. As soon as he heard of the defeat of Kāsim Alī at Udhuā Nullah, he returned to Purnea and gathered his adherents around him. Before dawn, he put himself at their head and marched to the palace, where the Deputy Governor was hiding with a few soldiers. The latter had no alternative but to surrender, and quietly submitted.

It was probably this Deputy Governor, or his brother Sher Alī Khān, who proved a good friend to four English sergeants, prisoners of Kāsim Alī Khān, who were among the few that escaped the massacre of Patna. These four men (three of whose

* A Broome, *History of the Bengal Army*, I, 300-1.

names are known, viz., Davis, Douglas and Speedy) had been sent to Purnea and "placed under the charge of the Nawāb of that district. When Kāsim Alī had determined upon the destruction of his prisoners, he sent orders to Purnea for them to be put to death. The Nawāb, who happened to be a humane, good man, and being highly pleased with the conduct of the sergeants whilst with him, declined putting the orders in execution. He, however, wrote to Kāsim Alī, entreating that he would recall his mandate, because he feared, if he was still determined upon it, it would be a difficult matter (as the men were beloved by all his people) to find one that would undertake the task. Kāsim Alī, on receipt of the letter, flew into a violent rage, and directed another order to be sent to the Nawāb, in which he told him, if he had not spirit himself to put his command in force against those faithless and treacherous Englishmen, to send them immediately to Patna, where ample justice should be done for the crimes they had committed. On this letter being delivered to the Nawāb, he sent for the sergeants, and with tears in his eyes informed them of the severe order he had received, and of the steps he had taken to preserve their lives; that he must now send them to Patna, where he hoped by the time they got there, the rage of Kāsim Alī might be cooled, and that they might probably escape death." They were accordingly sent in a boat down the old Kosi with a guard of 13 men, but when the boat had reached the Ganges, they succeeded in overpowering the guārd, and in making their way to Udhuā Nullah, where they joined the British army under Major Adams.*

Rohi-ud-dīn Khān, having received the submission of the Deputy Governor, met with no opposition. The people of Purnea welcomed him with *nazars*, and the revolution was peacefully effected. He next seized a boat laden with treasure for Monghyr, which had put in close to the crazy vessel in which he had come to Purnea, and then sent letters to Major Adams and Mīr Jafar Khān, acknowledging the latter as his master, and congratulating both of them upon their successes. "Mīr Jafar Khān, sensible that the war was far from being at an end, was pleased to see so much strength and revenue deducted from the enemy's scale; and he sent to the new Governor a letter, in which he extolled his character for what he had done, and bestowed upon him the government of Purnea. The new Governor, being strengthened by this accession of authority, established his government everywhere, treated both the people and gentry with the

* A. Broome, *History of the Bengal Army*, Vol. I, p. 392; App. p. xlvi.

utmost benignity; and, firmly keeping his seat on the steed of fortune and good luck, he continued to ride in the fields of command and success for a number of years together; nor did he lose his seat, but when Muhammad Reza Khān came to be promoted to the office of Deputy Governor of Bengal."* He appears to have been superseded for one year (1766-67) by Suchet Rai, who was deputed from Murshidābād to collect the revenue, and to have been succeeded by Razi-ud-dīn Muhammad Khān. The last of the Governors was Muhammad Alī Khān, who was replaced in 1770 by Mr. Ducarrel, the first English Supervisor or Collector.

EARLY BRITISH ADMINISTRATION. The early years of British rule were years of trouble for Purnea. The district suffered terribly during the great famine of 1770, about one-third of the inhabitants dying. There was scarcity in 1783, and again in 1791, the rice crop being almost an entire failure, while in the latter year there was a virulent epidemic of disease. There was no little difficulty in establishing the land revenue administration on a firm basis, and, to add to the troubles of the British officials, there was constant trouble along the northern frontier. In October 1788 one of the Nepalese *sardārs* raided the village of Churli, carrying off one of its inhabitants. The remonstrances of the British succeeded in securing his release, but he had been so brutally handled, his wounds mortifying and being full of maggots, that he died a few days later. "This affair," it was reported, "has caused a general alarm along the frontier, and I am very certain if it is overlooked, the consequence will be a total desertion of that part of country, for no man will choose to hold his life and property at the mercy of a set of inhuman barbarians, which without the protection of Government must be the case in future." A fortnight later the Collector reported to the Board of Revenue another outrage committed by the Nepalese and wrote:—"The conquest of Morung by the Goorca in defiance of Mr Hastings' order to them not to cross the Cossy, the assassination of the young Rajah of Morung who had taken protection in Purnea, and their repeated ravages on our frontier, by which the revenue has at times suffered considerably, having been overlooked or not resented, have given them such an opinion of the moderation and forbearance of our Government, that nothing but a decisive step will be sufficient to restrain them within proper bounds." Again in 1793, we find that a band of *fakīrs*, said to be 'of the same description as the *fakīrs* who for some time have been in the habit of plundering in the eastern provinces,' came in from Nepāl, raided several villages

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin*, II, 516-7.

on the boundary and made an unsuccessful attempt on one of the frontier posts.*

NEPALESE WAR. The aggression of the Nepalese continued during the next century. In 1808 the Gurkha governor of the Morang seized the whole zamīndāri of Bhīmnagar. This flagrant encroachment could not be overlooked, and in June 1809 a detachment of troops was sent to the frontier. The Nepalese, yielding to the threat of an immediate appeal to the sword, evacuated the land next year. In 1814 the first Nepalese war broke out, and Major Latter, with a force of 2,000 men, was sent up to defend the Purnea frontier, and to give the Rājā of Sikkim every assistance in expelling the Gurkhas from the eastern hills, short of an actual advance of troops. The presence of this force was effectual in preserving the peace of the frontier, and communications were kept up with the Rājā of Sikkim. No fighting appears to have taken place, with the exception of a night attack on a post stationed at Mudwani. This attack was repulsed, after the Gurkhas had fired the tents and baggage, and the post was evacuated next day. In 1817, after the conclusion of the war, Major Latter concluded a treaty with the Sikkim Rājā at Titalya, by which the British granted the latter all the land between the Mechī and the Tīsta which had been ceded to them by the Nepalese.†

THE MUTINY OF 1857. Since that year the peace of the district has only been broken by the Mutiny of 1857. On its outbreak, there was no little anxiety regarding the loyalty of the troops stationed just across the border at Jalpāigurī, viz., the 73rd Regiment of Native Infantry and a detachment of the 11th Irregular Cavarly. As a precautionary measure, permission was given, in October 1857, to Mr. Kerry, an indigo planter, to raise a corps of Nepalese; and in November 100 sailors under Captain Burbank were sent to Purnea to protect that place in case of a mutiny at Jalpāigurī. At the end of November news came that some companies of the 73rd Native Infantry had broken out at Dacca, and it was expected that they would march to Jalpāigurī and raise the troops there. The Commissioner, Mr. Yule, promptly left Bhāgalpur, taking with him a detachment of 50 men of the 5th Fusiliers, then stationed at Monghyr. Marching to Purnea, he joined forces with Captain Burbank and moved to Kishanganj as the point from which he could most readily and effectually act in any direction. With him went all the Europeans in the Division,

* J. Byrne, *Purnea Settlement Report* (1908), App. V, pp. XL-XLV.

† H. T. Prinsep, *Political and Military Transactions in India* (1825), Vol. I, pp. 78, 79, 85, 121, 130, 207.

planters, civil officers, etc., all well mounted and armed, forming a by no means insignificant body of most willing and cheerful volunteers. In a few days Mr. Yule had collected not less than 80 elephants, and with his little army was ready for anything that might happen. On the 4th and 5th December two different detachments of the 11th Irregular Cavalry mutinied and went off. On the 9th news reached Kishanganj that they had passed to the south of that place. Mr. Yule, putting his men on elephants, marched all night, and arriving in Purnea (40 miles distant) before daylight, met the *sowārs*, as they were leisurely marching into the place. They refused to face his force, and retired a few miles. The Commissioner followed, and on the 11th came up with them just as they were preparing to march. On this occasion they fought with a resolution worthy of a better cause, some of them charging up to the steady little squares which formed in admirable order to receive them, and falling dead on the bayonets. In the end, they retired under cover of a heavy fog, carrying with them many wounded. Not a single casualty occurred on our side.

On the morning of the 12th the Commissioner, having received information that the *sowārs* intended crossing the Kosi to Nāthpur, started to intercept them, and in 45 hours accomplished the 50 miles to that place, including the crossing of the Kosi with its numerous and extensive quicksands. Here he halted a few days and learnt that the *sowārs* had entered the Nepāl Tarai, and were at Chatra, 36 miles to the north. They were, therefore, out of reach, and as he had received an express from Jalpāigurī, urgently requesting aid against the Dacca mutineers, he determined to move in that direction *via* Kishanganj. In 36 hours he had covered the 64 miles to Kishanganj, and on the 22nd December he proceeded to Titālya, and thence to a post between Silīgurī and Pankhābāri. Having waited there till the 26th without further intelligence, he determined on moving to Chawā Ghāt on the Tīsta, where the mutineers from Dacca were expected to cross. On nearing the *ghāt*, he came in sight of the enemy's encampment in a position unfavourable for an attack, and withdrawing into the jungle, established his force on the path by which, as he was told, they must pass. They evaded him, however, at night, taking an unfrequented bye-path, and on the morning of the 28th he learned that they had crossed the Mahānadī and were making for the Darjeeling road. Mr. Yule, leaving his camp standing, took up a position on the road, and after waiting some hours and seeing nothing of them, had just ordered his men back to camp, when the rebels were seen crossing the road at a

little distance off. So rapid was their rush across the small open space from jungle to jungle that Mr. Yule's advanced party had only time to fire a volley, which killed one straggler, before they again disappeared in the jungle, and the pursuit, which Captain Burbank continued for two to three miles, was hopeless and unsuccessful.

The fugitives having thus made good their escape into the forest, Mr. Yule moved, parallel with them, on its outskirts, to prevent their making any inroad into Purnea, and reached the Kosi opposite Nāthpur on the very same day that they effected a junction with the *sowārs* at Chatra. An attack on their position at Chatra failed, in consequence of the rebels making a sudden retreat across the Kosi at a most difficult ford, where many of their horses, unable to reach the opposite bank, were abandoned. Major Richardson, who was watching the opposite bank lower down, was too late to intercept them, and the rebels got off through the Nepāl Tarai, eventually making their way into Oudh.

ARCHÆOLOGY. There are few remains of archæological interest in the district, with the exception of the ruins of some old forts, such as Benugarh, Asurgarh, Sikligarh and Jalālgarh. Near a fort called Satligarh, close to Dharārā, is a stone monolith of great age, under which a gold coin of the second century A. D. was discovered. On the Chotapahār hill near Manihār some beautiful carved slabs of black stones have been found, which point to the existence of an old temple there; but with this exception, very few pieces of ancient sculpture are extent. "Old carvings"; wrote a former Collector, Mr. H. G. Cooke, "are very rare in this district. With the exception of those found in Manihāri, the only one worthy of notice was found by me at Khagrā near Kishanganj, whence, as it appeared to be unappreciated, I removed it to headquarters and deposited it near my office. Possibly the pious Brāhman who found it there thought a miracle had been performed by the sudden appearance of this deity; at any rate he was not slow to profit by the occasion, for he propped him up with a bamboo, and made him a garland of marigold, and ornamented him with vermilion, and then demanded a fee of every successful party to a case in the criminal courts. This god, whom I cannot get identified, has lost four arms and a nose, but the carving is extremely good, especially in the details, and is quite a work of art."* A fuller description of the places of archæological interest will be found in Chapter XV.

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* *Calcutta Review*, April 1889, p. 248.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

THE population of the district as now constituted grew steadily from 1872 to 1891, as shown in the margin, the increase in the first decade amounting to 7·8 per cent., while there was a further increase of 5·1 per cent. between 1881 and 1891. The growth was most rapid in the great pastoral thānas of Damdahā and Forbesganj (formerly Matiāri), which attracted numerous settlers from Bhāgalpur, Monghyr and Darbhangā, and added a third and a seventh, respectively, to their population. The census of 1901, however, disclosed a decrease of 3·6 per cent., a result attributed to the general unhealthiness of the district and to two severe epidemics of cholera. As regards the former cause, the vital statistics collected in the nine years 1892-1900 show that the deaths outnumbered the births by 38,239. As regards the latter, the cholera epidemic of 1900 alone accounted for over 46,000 deaths, while the total recorded death-rate in that year reached the appalling figure of 57 per mille. GROWTH OF POPULATION.

1872	...	1,714,995
1881	...	1,849,073
1891	...	1,944,658
1901	...	1,874,794

The results of the last census are summarized as follow in the Bengal Census Report :—"The only thāna in the whole district that shows an increase is Saifganj,* which owes its development to the fact that it contains the important railway junction at Katihār. Thanks to this thāna, the tract west of the Mahānandā has slightly gained in population since 1891, while that to the east of that river is responsible for the whole of the loss which has taken place. The decline is least marked in Purnea itself and in the thānas bordering on the Kosi, and, if Saifganj be left out of account, it becomes gradually greater towards the east. It is most considerable in Balarāmpur,† which is the unhealthiest thāna in the district. No reason beyond unhealthiness can be CENSUS OF 1901.

* This is now the Katihār thāna.
† This is now the Gopālpur thāna.

assigned for the changes which have taken place. The fatal epidemic of cholera in 1900 affected chiefly the western part of the district, which, but for this, would doubtless have shown much better results." The following table gives the salient statistics of the enumeration:—

SUBDIVISION.	Area in square miles.	NUMBER OF—		Population.	Population per square mile.	Percentage of variation between 1891 and 1901.
		Towns.	Villages.			
Purnea ...	2,571	2	1,528	838,333	326	—2·6
Kishanganj ...	1,346	1	1,227	619,476	460	—4·8
Arāriā ...	1,077	...	600	416,985	387	—3·6
DISTRICT TOTAL ...	4,994	3	3,355	1,874,794	375	—3·6

It is of some interest to note the wild rumours caused by the taking of the census even as late as 1891. The most general was that fresh taxation was to be levied. In the Kadwā and Katihār thānas there was a rumour that young men were required as recruits for the army. In many parts it was said that castrated goats would be confiscated by Government; this led the owners to sell off their animals by scores and hundreds. Again, others said that the goats were to have their ears lopped off, be branded with a heated pice, and then let loose, that all goats were to be enumerated and then let loose with a brand of Government seal upon the body, and the like. There were occasional rumours, too, that the widows among the higher classes who were under age were to be compelled to re-marry, and that Muhammadan lads were to be circumcised by low caste people like the Chamārs and Mehtārs.

Density. In the district as a whole there are only 375 persons per square mile, and the density of population is less than in any other Bihār district. This low density is due mainly to the unhealthiness of the climate and to the infertility of the western half of the district, where the soil consists mainly of sand deposited by the Kosi, which, moreover, frequently causes disastrous floods. In the south-east there are numerous marshes, which are not fit for cultivation. Further north, on both sides of the Mahānandā, there is a somewhat greater population, but in only one thāna Bahādurganj, does it exceed 500 to the square mile. In that thāna the soil is able to support a larger population than elsewhere, for it is a fertile tract, extensively cultivated with

jute and is intersected by innumerable rivulets and water channels which irrigate the land. Density is least in thānas Korhā (formerly Gondwārā) and Gopālpur (formerly Balarāmpur), which support 260 and 242 persons per square mile respectively. In both thānas there is a large area of waste land and of land covered with jungle, while Gopālpur is studded with marshes unfit for cultivation. Generally speaking, the northern and eastern portions of the district are more thickly populated than the south and west.

Migration. According to the statistics obtained at the census of 1901, only 2 per cent. of the population are emigrants, *i.e.*, natives of the district who were enumerated elsewhere, while 5·8 per cent. are immigrants, *i.e.*, natives of other districts who were in this district at the time of the census. In this respect Purnea is more like North Bengal than Bihār, for the former is notable for the very small number of inhabitants who leave it, and the latter for the large exodus of its people. In Purnea, as in Northern Bengal, the reluctance of the people to migrate is explained by the sparseness of the population, the fertility of the soil, and the low rates of rent. The excess of immigrants is no new feature, for both in 1881 and 1891 they outnumbered those who had left the district. Many of the immigrants, however, are temporary visitors, who come in search of employment or bring their cattle in the cold weather months to graze on the splendid pasture lands on the left bank of the river Kosi. Where so much of the migration is of a purely temporary character, it is very difficult to frame an estimate of the extent to which a district has gained or lost by the movements of the people.

There is a certain amount of migration to Nepāl, but this is counterbalanced by an influx of settlers from that State. The movements across the frontier are said to be due mainly to matrimonial arrangements, but there are also many persons living in Purnea who hold land in Nepāl, but only go there when agricultural operations require their presence.

Towns and villages. There are only three towns, viz., Purnea, Kishanganj and Katihār, which have an aggregate population of 31,439 persons or 1 per cent. of the total population. The remainder are contained in 3,355 villages. There are, according to the Revenue Survey and Boundary Commissioner's lists, 5,474 *mauzas* in the district. The average size of a *mauza* is, therefore, somewhat less than 1 square mile. The largest *mauza* is Murādpur, thāna Korhā, its area being 12,621 acres, and the smallest is Sureni Milik, thāna Damdahā, of which the area is five acres. The villages, as

a rule, stand compact with their cultivation round them, like those in the Deccan, in wide spreading plains.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Purnea is essentially a border district. On the west it adjoins Bihār; on the east are typical Bengali districts; on the north it marches with the Nepāl Tarai; and on the south it is only separated from the aboriginal races of the Santāl Parganas by the river Ganges. The effect of its situation is noticeable both in the varying physique and character of the population, and also in the language. More remarkable, however, is the ethnical, religious and linguistic boundary formed by the river Mahānandā. The country to the east is more nearly allied to Bengal, and the bulk of the inhabitants are of Rājbansi (Koch) origin, while to the west the castes are the same as in the adjoining Bihār districts. Musalmāns number two-thirds of the population east of the river, but only one-third to the west of it. On the confines of Dinājpur and Mālda, again, Bengali is the mother-tongue of the people. The farther west one goes, the more faint become the traces of the Bengali tongue, till in the neighbourhood of the river Kosi in *pargana* Dharampur one comes to a stronghold of Mithilā Brāhmanism, where all connection with Bengal ceases.

To go into further detail, the tract lying east of the river Mahānandā consists of thānas Kishanganj, Islāmpur and Gopālpur, while the tract to the west, which comprises the greater portion of the district, consists of thānas Bahādurganj, Arāriā, Forbesganj, Rānīganj, Purnea, Kadwā, Damdahā, Korhā, Amur Kasbā and Katihār. The character of the people in the latter division is akin to that of the people of Bihār; while the southern and the western portions of this area contain people who may be called strictly Bihāris in their social relations and customs. The thāna of Damdahā, which is contiguous with North Bhāgalpur, presents the type of a truly pastoral country, where hardy Rājputs and others have, from generation to generation, devoted themselves to agricultural pursuits and to the rearing of cattle. The west of thāna Rānīganj and the north of Forbesganj are of the same character as Damdahā, but as we proceed eastward there is a considerable change. In portions of thāna Kadwā, in Gopālpur, Amur Kasbā and Katihār, a large proportion of the population appear to be more Bengali than Bihāri and speak the Bengali tongue, while the majority of those living along the border line between the two divisions speak a corrupt dialect, partly Hindī and partly Bengali. This state of things continues till the thānas of Gopālpur, Kishanganj and Islāmpur are reached. A portion of Kishanganj and Gopālpur borders on the districts of Dinājpur and Mālda, while north Islāmpur touches the confines of Nepal

and a small portion of the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpāigurī. In this area the character of the people is like that of the inhabitants of the neighbouring tracts.

LANGUAGES. At the census of 1901 the language of 1,773,000 persons, or 94·6 per cent. of the population, was returned as Hindī, and of 92,000 persons, or 4·9 per cent., as Bengali. Dr. Grierson, however, estimates the number of persons speaking Bengali to be 603,000 or nearly a third of the inhabitants. According to him, the dialect in question is, in the main, Bengali with an admixture of Hindī, but it is written in the Kaithī character of Bihār, in which Hindī and not Bengali is written. This fact doubtless weighed with the enumerators more than the niceties of grammatical construction; and, as a matter of fact, it is extremely difficult in many places to decide with which of the two languages the local dialect should be classed, for Bihāri fades imperceptibly into Bengali and *vice versâ*.

Maithilī. The Hindī vernacular current in the district is the Maithilī dialect of Biharī. It is spoken in its greatest purity by the Brāhmans in the west of Purnea, who have a literature and traditions which have retarded the corruption of the dialect. This form of dialect is classified by Dr. Grierson as Standard Maithilī, similar to that spoken in North Darbhangā and the Supaul subdivision of Bhāgalpur; and it is estimated that it is spoken by 30,000 persons. In the remainder of western Purnea and in the centre of the district a corrupt form of Maithilī is spoken. It is locally known as Gāonwāri or the village dialect, and is called Eastern Maithilī by Dr. Grierson. To the east it becomes more and more infected by Bengali, till on the east of the river Mahānandā it is superseded by the Siripuriā dialect of that language. The latter dialect is principally spoken by Muhammadans, but Hindus to the east of the river still speak Matihilī.*

Bengali. The Siripuriā dialect is a border form of speech, Bengali in the main, but containing expressions borrowed from Maithilī. The character of this dialect is described as follows by Dr. Grierson:— "The western limit of Northern Bengali extends into the Purnea district. That language may be taken as occupying the eastern third of the district, that is to say, the whole of the Kishanganj and the eastern half of the Sadar subdivisions. In the Kishanganj subdivision, and in the Kasbā Amur and Balarāmpur† thānas, the Musalmāns, who are said to be of Koch origin, speak

* Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V, Part 2, pp. 13, 86-88.

† Now Amur Kasbā and Gopālpur.

a mixture of Bihāri and Bengali, closely resembling the Koch-Bengali of Mālda. This dialect is called Kishanganjiā or Siripuriā, and is returned as spoken by 603,623 souls. Although, in the main, a Bengali dialect, it is written in the Kaithī character, which is one of those used for Bihāri. It is unnecessary to give an analysis of its forms, as it closely resembles, on the one hand, the dialects of Mālda, and on the other hand, in the forms borrowed from Bihāri, the dialect existing in western Purnea."*

RELIGIONS.

The census of 1901 shows that Hindus number 1,080,091 or 57·6 per cent. of the population, while Muhammadans number 793,672 or 42·3 per cent. There are 439 Christians, and the aggregate number of members of all other religions is 592. The proportion of Hindus is greatest in thāna Damdahā in the west, and decreases as we proceed towards the north-east, until in the thāna of Islāmpur in the Kishanganj subdivision, there is only one Hindu to every two Muhammadans. The distribution of other religions depends upon local circumstances. Thus, for example, the indigo and other industries have drawn Europeans and Eurasians to the thānas of Korhā, Kadwā, Katihār, Forbesganj and Purnea; while Jains and others are chiefly confined to places where there are commercial facilities.

Some popular beliefs.

In this district there is only a faint dividing line between the religious beliefs and practices of the lower class Hindus and Muhammadans, which has been well illustrated in Mr. Byrne's Settlement Report. "In every village can be found a *Kāliasthān*, and Hindus and Muhammadans celebrate their characteristic festivals together. At the time of marriages, Muhammadans perform some ceremony at the Bhagwati Asthān and put vermilion on the bride's forehead. Attached to almost every house, even of Muhammadans, is a little shrine called Khudai Ghar or God's house, and prayers are offered there in which the names of Allah and Kāli both figure. When ill, even Muhammadans call in a Hindu Ojhā, who recites some *mantras* over the sick man. They freely offer goats, fowls, pigeons and the first fruits of trees and crops to purely Hindu deities, and especially to the village godling, who generally lives in the most convenient tree. The actual sacrifice is done by a Hindu. Hindus and Muhammadans alike yoke cows in their ploughs in this locality. All the low class Hindus, and the degenerate Muhammadans believe implicitly in evil spirits. The following plan is adopted to avert their influence. Small offerings of sugar, spices, bread and flowers are

* Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V, Part I, p. 139.

made to the trees in which the evil spirits reside. Then on a Tuesday or a Saturday towards the end of the month, an earthen vessel is filled with these offerings. This is placed at the nearest cross-roads. The evil spirits have been bribed to leave the village by the offerings, and they attach themselves to the first man who touches the earthen vessel, and accompany him to his home and abide with him. The most popular deity among the lower grades, both Hindu and Musalmān, is Devatā Mahārāj and his door-keeper Hadi. His abode and temple are very primitive. A long bamboo is planted in the ground, and from it are suspended an old winnowing-basket, a bow, an old fishing net and a hook. This is the abode of the deity and his door-keeper; and the usual petty offerings are made to them there. Geian means the spirit of a dead man. Their shrines also are nothing more than two long bamboos stuck in the ground. Dhobis, Musahars and Jolāhās worship Geians under various names."

Another quaint instance of superstitious belief is the manner in which cultivators act when their crops are damaged by insects. A black earthen pot which has already been used in cooking, is marked on the bottom with the sign of a cross in lime, and placed in the middle of the field. It is called *tatkā*, and it is believed that, after it is set up, the worms leave the field. It will not surprise the reader to learn that this is not always the case. There is another kind of *tatkā*, consisting of a sealed paper in which an order to the worms to leave the field is written. The seal is made with a pice or a rupee, and the paper is hung in one of the corners of the field.

Of the total number of Christians returned at the census of 1901, 156 were Europeans and 149 were Eurasians, while only 134 were natives, from which it is evident that Christianity has made little progress among the native population. The earliest Christian Mission established in the district was that known as the Titalyā Mission, which started work in 1816. In that year Mr. Schroeter came to Titalyā, at the suggestion of Major Latter, the Commanding Officer there, who was anxious that a missionary should learn Tibetan, in order to translate the Scriptures into that language. He hoped that Titalyā might thus become a link between India and China; and in pursuance of this object, he sent to Paris and bought a number of books on Tibetan and Chinese literature for Mr. Schroeter's use. This collection contained some valuable works by Jesuits and other travellers on Tibet and the neighbouring countries, which had belonged originally to conventual libraries, and had been confiscated during the French Revolution. They were subsequently made over to the library of Bishop's College, to

Christians.

which Major Latter also presented a valuable collection of Tibetan manuscripts.

In 1818 Mr. Schroeter received a salary from Government, in consideration of his studying Tibetan; and in 1819 he was engaged in prepairing a Tibetan grammar and dictionary, in conducting a Hindustāni service for the benefit of the Christian drummers, and in preaching to Lepchās or any other natives he met. Next year he died of fever, and Mr. LeRoche was appointed to succeed him, the Government offering to pay his salary. His constitution was, however, unable to bear the climate; and he died while entering the Thames on his return to England. Messrs. Reichardt and Maisch were next appointed to Titalyā, but the death of Major Latter, founder of the Mission, at Kishanganj in 1822 led to its abandonment.*

The only Mission now (1908) at work in the district is the Baptist Mission, which has a station at Purnea town and contemplates opening another at Rāni near Nepālganj.

Muhammadans.

The Muhammadans predominate to the east of the Mahānandā, three-fourths of the total number being resident in the Kishanganj subdivision. The majority are believed to be descendants of aboriginal Koches or hill tribes. They are said to be more spirited and turbulent than their cousins in the south and west, and their characteristics have been described as follows by a former Collector, Mr. H. G. Cooke :—"I am not aware that the Muhammadans of Kishanganj subdivision owe their predatory instincts, which have given them an evil reputation in the police annals of the district, to an infusion of hill blood, though that may indirectly contribute to form their character which, while it shows the subtlety of the Bengali, has a dash of audacity which must be derived from some hardier race: but there can be no question that they derive their robust frames and fair complexions from that source.

"The circumstance of the Muhammadan faith having been very generally adopted has not, by any means, led to the introduction of the Pardānashin system. This is probably due to the free instincts of a hill people being too strong to admit of such a change: on market days the wives and daughters of farmers turn out in all their finery in a manner that would horrify the strait-laced Moslems of Eastern Bengal, where females between the age of eight and eighty are rarely seen abroad. No one who has visited Darjeeling could fail to be struck by the strong resemblance in face and figure between the women of the northern

* J. Long, *Handbook of Bengal Missions*, (1848), pp. 235—37.

portion of the Purnea district and their sisters in the hills. There is no attempt made to conceal their fair round faces, the head and shoulders being left bare : the *sāri* is unknown, being replaced by a cloth which is tied tightly round the body, passing just below the arms, which are left free and uncovered, while it forms a skirt which reaches below the calf of the leg. The cloth used is locally manufactured and dyed, and the colours, which are arranged in stripes, are invariably in good taste and produce a pleasing effect.

"The physique of this class is such that, should occasion require, I doubt not that they would be able to carry a maund on their backs, or even the traditional grand piano, nearly as well as their primitive sisters in the hills, whom they so closely resemble; but happily there is no occasion for their doing so, for a more prosperous class of agriculturists does not exist in the district or perhaps in the province".

1.	Sheikh	670 814	9.	Hāri ...	39,597
2.	Goālā ...	124,734	10.	Teli ...	34,258
3.	Rājbansi	103,002	11.	Dosādh ...	32,960
4.	Musahar	56,819	12.	Saiyad ...	32,399
5.	Kaibartta	53,374	13.	Jolāhā ...	30,925
6.	Dhānuk	41,854	14.	Brāhman	28,083
7.	Gangai	41,570	15.	Koiri ...	26,886
8.	Tānti	41,076	16.	Baniyā ...	26,021
			17.	Kewat	25,392.

PRINCIPAL CASTES. The marginal statement shows the strength of the principal castes, and the following is a brief description of them and of a few other castes peculiar to the district.

Sheikhs. The Sheikhs, who are chiefly found in the east and north of the district, form more than one-third of its total population. Their features, characteristics and habits show that they are mostly the descendants of converts from Hinduism, and, as will be seen later, they still join with Hindus in several religious rites. Four sub-castes are recognized locally, viz., (1) Bengali, (2) Kulaiya, (3) Habalyar and (4) Khutta, of which the Bengali sub-caste is numerically the strongest. Its members chiefly inhabit the Kishanganj subdivision, thāna Gopālpur, and the eastern parts of thānas Arāriā, Amur Kasbā and Kadwā; so that the river Mahānandā may fairly be taken to be the boundary between them and the other Sheikhs. They speak a mongrel dialect, partly Bengali and partly Hindi, and are described as being active, industrious and crafty. They are probably the descendants of converts from the Rājbansis or Koches, and retain several of their former habits and customs, many still building little shrines for Hindu deities, generally Bishahari, the snake goddess. When asked to account for this practice, they explain that, "according to the custom of their forefathers," they have got both a *Khuda kā ghar* and a *Bishahari Mai kā ghar.*

The Kulaiyas mostly inhabit a strip of the country in the middle of the district, about 15 miles in breadth, extending from the south of Arāriā on the north, to a line drawn from Kadwā thāna to Purnea on the south. They also seem to be of Hindu origin and retain many Hindu customs. Indeed, it is said that they owe their name to a purely Hindu practice, viz., not marrying in their own *kul* or family, and it is noticeable that they never marry their cousins or other relatives like other Musalmāns. Of late years, however, some of the principal families have abandoned this restriction. The Kulaiyas are generally strong and hardy, but not so active and cunning as their neighbours in the east. The bulk of them are cultivators, but there is a small minority of landlords and tenure-holders, and some serve as day-labourers.

The Habalyars are said to be so called from their having been formerly inhabitants of *pargana* Haveli. They have now gone further afield, and are chiefly found between the Kulaiyas on the east and the Khuttas on the west, in thānas Purnea, Korhā, Katihār and Kadwā. They seem to be Bihāris by extraction and generally speak a debased form of Hindī ; but those resident in the Katihār thāna can read, write and speak Bengali.

The Khuttas, who inhabit the west and north-west of the district, viz., parts of thānas Damdahā, Rānīganj, and Forbesganj are very few in number, and seem to be immigrants from the district of Bhāgalpur, with which they keep up a connexion.

Goālās. The Goālās are the most numerous Hindu caste, accounting for one-ninth of the total Hindu population. They are chiefly resident in the Purnea and Arāriā subdivisions, and are most numerous in the west of the district, where whole villages composed of Goālās may be found on the sandy plains formed by the river Kosi. Here they follow their hereditary occupation of herdsmen on the luxuriant pasture lands, which attract vast herds of cattle. Large numbers also combine agriculture with cattle grazing or cultivate land exclusively. A few of them have risen to be petty traders and *mahājans*, but it is very seldom that a Goālā falls so low as to become a labourer, for he can always find employment as a cowherd under both Hindu and Musalmān landholders, or as a ploughman under castes that do not cultivate the soil with their own hands.

Rājbansis. The Rājbansis are a caste of mixed origin, some being descended from Mongoloid Koches, while others are of Dravidian stock. At the last census, in the course of tabulation, Koch and Rājbansi were treated as synonymous terms ; but in 1891 the Rājbansi and Koches were classified separately, the former

numbering 52,356 and the latter 46,076; while 6,734 persons were entered as Deshi and 21,009 as Paliyās. The fact appears to be that there are four sub-castes, viz., Rājbansi, Paliyā, Deshi and Koch. The Rājbansis are said to claim descent from the Koch Rājās, and the Deshi from the higher Koch families, though they also often claim to be Rājbansis. The Paliyās and Koches are both inferior to them in social status, and differ from them not in feature, but very widely in colour, being generally of dark complexion, while the Rājbansis and Deshis are fair. The Paliyās and Koches are docile and quiet people, keeping themselves aloof from the people among whom they settle. They are cultivators and also deal in grain and other articles, while the Koches in some places serve as palanquin bearers. As a class, all four sub-castes are very true to their word, and make good tenants, being punctual in payment of their rents.

The Deshis are said in the Bengal Census Report of 1901 to be a subdivision of the Paliyās, but in this district they appear to be separate sub-castes. "They do not," writes Mr. Byrne, "intermarry, and will not eat together. The Bābu Paliyās (as they like to be called) eat swine's flesh. The others do not. The Deshis keep ducks, and the others abhor this. Again, the Paliyās, unlike most Hindus, are not slaves to caste regulations. They work at times as oil-pressers, blacksmiths and weavers, and their women as midwives. But their women, and, indeed, all the women of Kishanganj, take no more direct part in agricultural operations than that involved in carrying the midday meals to the fields."

The origin of the Rājbansis or Koches is disputed, but Sir Herbert Risley's conclusion is that "the Koch, Rājbansi, Paliyā, Deshi and other varieties, by whatever names they are called, are descended from a Dravidian stock which may probably have occupied the valley of the Ganges at the time of the Aryan advance into Bengal. Driven forward by this incursion into the swamps and forests of Northern and North-Eastern Bengal, the tribe were here and there brought into contact with the Mongoloid races of the Lower Himālayas and of the Assam border, and their type may have been affected to a varying degree by intermixture with these people. But, on the whole, Dravidian characteristics predominate among them over Mongolian." They are anxious to rise in the social scale and claim to be an offshoot of the Rājput clan. Feeling no doubt that to yoke cows in ploughs was inconsistent with this pretension, they renounced the practice a few years ago. Their claim to kindred with Rājputs is, however, untenable. Their appearance is unmistakeably

Mongoloid; their women carry children slung in a cloth on their backs; they bury their dead; widow-marriage is prevalent among them; high prices are taken from would-be bridegroom by the fathers or brothers of prospective brides before they consent to the marriage: they do not wear the sacred thread, and they often indulge freely in intoxicating liquors.*

Kaibarttas. The Kaibarttas are a caste of cultivators chiefly resident in the centre of the district, in thānas Korhā, Katihār, Purnea, Kadwā and Amur Kasbā. They are good husbandmen, cultivating their lands with pains, and nearly all have occupancy rights. A few of the poorer Kaibarttas, however, are fishermen or field labourers. They speak a dialect of Bengali, and in their habits resemble their fellow castemen of the neighbouring districts of Bengal.

Musahars. The Musahars, who chiefly inhabit the west and south of the district, are believed to be, for the greater part, descendants of immigrants from Bhāgalpur and Monghyr, and still keep up connexion with their fellow castemen in those districts. They stand at the bottom of the social scale, not being allowed to have houses in the same *basti* as higher Hindu castes, but relegated to the outskirts of the village, where they eke out a scanty subsistence as day labourers.

Dhānuks. The Dhānuks are a caste of cultivators and menial servants, but the former predominate, and are as independent a set of men as any other. The Dhānuks of Purnea differ in several important respects from the Dhānuks in other parts of Bihār. Elsewhere difference of occupations does not prevent members of one sub-caste marrying members of another; it is only in Purnea that they form an impassable barrier to intermarriage between the Khawāsiā sub-caste, who are employed as domestic servants, and the Gharbait and Mandal, who confine themselves to agriculture. In Bihār it is usually held that a men may not take a second wife unless the first is barren or suffers from an incurable disease; but in Purnea no such restrictions seem to exist, and a man may have as many wives as he can afford to maintain. A widow may marry again by the *sagai* or *chumaunā* form, in which Brāhmans take no part, the union of the couple being completed by the bridegroom smearing red lead with his left hand on the forehead of the bride. In Purnea, again, the deceased husband's younger brother or cousin, should such a relative exist, is considered to have a preferential claim to marry the widow; but elsewhere less stress is laid on this condition, and a widow is free to marry whom

* J. Byrne, *Purnea Settlement Report* (1908), p. 13.

she pleases, provided that she does not infringe the prohibited degrees.*

The Gangai or Ganesh is a caste peculiar to this and some of the districts to the east and south-east. They are apparently of Nepalese origin, and those resident in the British dominions are said to form only a section of the main body inhabiting Nepāl. They set up prayer flags like those so commonly seen in the hills, and their features present a distinctly Mongoloid appearance, for they have a flat face, depressed nose, and generally fair colour. A common saying in that part of the district which the Gangais now inhabit is:—*Jahān jahān Kankai, Tahān tahān Gangai*" *i. e.*, "You will find the Gangais, wherever you find the river Kankai." The saying is based on fact, for the Gangais abound only in the country traversed by the Kankai and its old beds. The similarity of their caste name and that of the river suggest the inference that they have been called after it. They are a quiet people, good cultivators, who also earn a living by weaving and burning lime. They do not keep so much aloof from other people of the district as those of Koch origin, for one or two Gangai families will settle and live among other castes in the same village, which pure Koches will not do. Gangais.

There are two sub-castes called Bara or Bābu and Chota. The latter are superior in status, as they abstain from pork and alcoholic drinks, in which the Bara Gangai indulges. The separation between the two groups is not quite complete, for a Chota Gangai will take a wife from, though he will not give his daughter to, a member of the Bara Gangai sub-caste. Some perform the *srāddha* on the 13th and others on the 30th day. When their paddy is in ear, they have a peculiar custom of going to their fields and calling out to the God of Plenty, *Khato Nabho Suraha*, after which they return home and immolate a pig to the deity. They rank with Hajjāms, Mālis and Sunris. At the census of 1891 they were enumerated as Gangais or Gangautas, but the latter are a separate caste, many of whom live along the Ganges, a fact supposed to account for their name.

The Tāntis or Tatwas are found in greatest strength in the west and south of the district, and as a class, are generally day-labourers and ploughmen. Land being very cheap, a few have succeeded in raising themselves to the position of cultivators. Their hereditary occupation is weaving, but, on account of the growing demand for European piece-goods, they have almost Tāntis.

* Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal.*

given up weaving, and only a few devote part of their time to it.

Hâris. The Hâris are a low caste, who work chiefly as day-labourers and village watchmen, almost all the *chaukidārs* in Kishanganj being recruited from their ranks. They appear to be Bengali in origin and, as such, speak a Bengali dialect. They are divided into two sub-castes, *viz*, Dai and Bhuinmâli. The females of the former only serve as midwives, while the latter make bamboo baskets, etc. They are at the bottom of the social scale, keeping herds of swine and eating pork, but abstaining from fowls.

Telis. The Telis are chiefly to be found in the Purnea and the Arāriā subdivisions, where the cultivation of mustard seed is extensive. Very few of them cultivate land exclusively.

Dosādhs. The Dosâdhs are nearly all found to the west of the river Mahānandā. They are chiefly day-labourers and village watchmen, and are regarded by their neighbours as professional thieves.

Saiyads. The Saiyads are fairly numerous, probably owing to the fact that Purnea was formerly the headquarters of a Muhammadan Governor. They are generally zamīndārs, *patnidārs*, cultivators and Government servants; three-fourths of the total number are inhabitants of thāna Bahâdurganj.

Jolāhās. The Jolâhās are Muhammadan weavers, but since the decline of the trade in country cloth they have given up their hereditary occupation, and are now nearly all cultivators or day-labourers. Half of the total number are residents of thānas Kadwâ and Islâmpur.

Brāhmans. Though met with in every part of the district, the Brāhmans are chiefly to be found in the west and south-west of the district. The majority support themselves by cultivation, keeping servants to do the actual field work; almost all of them hold valuable occupancy holdings at fixed low rates, and among them are found zamīndārs, *milkdārs* and *patni* tenure-holders. The largest Brāhman landholders are the families of Champānagar, Rāmnagar and Srīnagar, who own extensive landed property in this district and in the districts of Monghyr and Bhāgalpur. Prominent among them is the Maithīl Brāhman, who generally bears the name of *Jhā* and wears his *pagri* in a peculiar fashion. It has a peak in front, and when made of folded cloth, the last fold is carried to the left of the head. The highest sept among them is the Srotriya, to which the Saifganj Rājā family belongs.

Koiris. The Koiris inhabit chiefly the west and the south-west of the district. From their distribution it appears that they are descendants of immigrants from the neighbouring district of Bhāgalpur, the Mâhanandā river being a barrier which they have not yet

passed. The majority are regular cultivators or market gardeners.

The Baniyās are principally found in and about the district and subdivisional headquarters, and in the various trade centres of the district. The number in the north-east and east is very small, while that in the west is comparatively large. About one-third of them are foreigners, belonging chiefly to the districts in the Patna Division. Baniyās.

The Kewats inhabit the western portion of the district, and evidently have migrated from the country west of the Kosi, where a large number of them are still to be found. They are recognized as servants of the Hindus and also as their boatmen, but in this district they have been diverted from their original profession, and the majority are cultivators like other agricultural castes, while some of them serve as field-labourers. Kewats.

Chāpuāl or Chāupāl is the name of a small caste of weavers found only in the Kishanganj subdivision, whither they are supposed to have migrated from Nadiā in a famine year. They are quite independent of any other caste, and there is now no trace of their caste of origin They have Maithil Brāhmans as their priests. They worship Siva and the other Hindu gods, but pay special homage to Bishahari, the god of serpents. They perform the *srāddha* on the 12th day after death. Infant and widow-marriage are practised; divorce is not allowed. Chāpuāl.

The Chapotās are usually cultivators, but some live by fishing. They have degraded Brāhmans, allow widow marriage, and worship the ordinary Hindu gods. Amongst the major deities, Kālī and Nārāyan, are most reverenced, while amongst the minor deities Bishahari is the favourite. The offerings consist of goats and pigeons, and Tuesday is the favourite day for worship. They bury their dead, placing the corpse on its right side, with the head to the north. The usual *srāddha* is performed for the propitiation of ancestors in general. They eat the flesh of crocodiles. They profess to be descended from a man who sprang from some betel-leaf which Siva spat out after chewing it. Chapotās.

The Kurariārs are a criminal tribe of Purnea and the Nepāl Tarai. They are also known as Byādh, *i.e.*, fowler, and their traditional occupation is to catch birds for sale. Many of them sell fuel, and it is not unlikely that the word Kurariar may be a corruption of Kuthariā or Kurhalia, from *kuthār* or *kurhāli*, the name of the axe used by them for splitting wood. They live in the jungle and subsist largely on jungle products. They have a bad reputation, and are often mixed up in dacoities and other Kurariārs.

offences against property, fleeing to the Nepāl Tarai when wanted by the police. They claim connexion with the Tiyars, and will eat any food except cooked rice at a Tiyar's house, though the latter will not return the compliment. There was formerly a prejudice against eating anything cooked by a married daughter, but this is gradually dying out. They call themselves Hindus, but the principal object of their worship is Lālmohan Palwān, a deified hero who is reputed to have been killed by a tiger. They usually employ the village barber as their match-maker and as the officiating priest at their marriage ceremonies but sometimes degraded Kanaujiā Brāhmans serve them. They do not eat any unclean food.

Kondiās. The Kondiās are found only in Purnea and are said to be allied to the Kurariārs. Like the latter, they were originally hunters, but have now become cultivators and menial servants. The connexion between the two castes is no longer admitted; they neither eat together nor intermarry, and are served by a separate class of inferior Brāhmans. The favourite deity of the Kondiās is Bishahari. They practise infant and widow marriage.

Banauts. There is one class which appears to be peculiar to this district, *viz.*, that known as Banaut. It is reported that they formerly belonged to the Goālā caste and were called Mandals, but for the last 4 or 5 years they have been using the *janeo* or sacred thread, like high caste Hindus, and have been arrogating the title of Singh as if they were Rājputs. They are found in the Damdahā Rānīganj, and Manihāri thānas, and are by occupation cultivators and *mahjāans*.

HOUSES. The houses of the people may be divided into five distinct kinds, each tenanted by a certain class of the population. The lowest class, the *banihārs* or day-labourers, build their houses with a bamboo frame-work, walled in with mats made of reeds, and thatched with *ūlū* grass. Such houses consist of a single room, measuring from 10 feet to 12 feet in length, and from 6 feet to 8 feet wide, having a pent roof called a *do-chhaprā*. The latter is of two kinds, *viz.*, *lakhai* when the ridges are straight, and *bhaunrdār* (from *bhaunr*, a curve) when they are slightly curved. They have no windows, and the only means of entrance is a doorway closed by a loose mat formed of grass, secured with strips of bamboo. The walls are plastered on the inside with clay. A house of this description costs from Rs. 8 to 10.

The houses built by the *grihashts* or petty cultivators are a little better and more commodious. They are from 15 to 18 feet long, and from 9 to 10 feet broad, the uprights of the roof being made of *sāl* or *sakhwā* (*Shorea robusta*). The walls are constructed

of strips of bamboo plastered over with clay. The house is usually surrounded by a yard called *āngan*, having huts on the four sides, the intervening space between them being confined by walls formed of the same materials. The female members of the family reside in this area, to which strangers are denied admission. Outside its limits is constructed a second hut, called a *gohāli* or cow-shed, the walls of which are unplastered. Close by the *gohāli* another building is made, which is known as the *baitakkhānā*, and here visitors are received. It consists merely of a roof supported either by *sāl* or bamboo posts, the sides being left entirely open, and having no walls or doors.

Cultivators of the better class, called *mālguzārs*, have several houses of the *do-chhaprā* kind, within an enclosure, entirely set aside for their wives or female relatives. The house occupied by the male members of the family is called a *chauāri* or *banglā*, and is a square-built cottage. The roof is formed of *chhapars* of a triangular shape, the base of each resting on a side wall, and the upper angles being joined together at the top. In this kind of house there is a *takhtaposh*, or wooden platform, covered over either with mats or blankets; and a few *khatiās* or bedsteads, rough frameworks supporting a coarse netting. Other huts and *do-chhaprās* are built as out-offices and for the accommodation of cattle. The *dhāwā* is another kind of cottage, inhabited by the better class of tenantry. It is built of mud walls, having a ceiling formed of clay spread on bamboo mats supported on *sāl* wood uprights. It is chiefly intended for the protection of property in case of fire and is used as a store-house.

Mustājirs and *patnidārs*, and other small landholders, build *chauāris* for the accommodation of their females. The fence surrounding the family enclosure is usually made of bamboo matting plastered over with clay, but the few who can afford to do so build brick walls. A short distance from this *haveli* or women's house, another *chauāri* of larger dimensions, with from four to five doors, is erected. Its clay-plastered walls are often white-washed with lime. Here the master of the house has his office, and spends most of his time. The *takhtaposh*, in houses of this description, is covered with a *satranji* or carpet, over which a white or figured cotton sheet is often spread. A few chairs are also kept in it for the reception of guests of position. Out-houses of the same kind as *do-chhaprās*, but on a smaller scale, are built as store-houses, and for the use of servants and cattle. Wooden doors are not, as a rule, found in *chauāris*. The cost of these buildings varies according to their size, and the materials of which they are constructed. If *sāl* beams and posts are used, and the walls are made of bamboo

matting and clay, the cost ranges between Rs. 150 and Rs. 250; but if the walls are of brick and mud, the expense is as high as Rs. 500 or Rs. 600.

Larger landed proprietors or zamīndārs, who are not numerous in the district of Purnea, live in masonry houses called *deorhīs*, built in a style common in the east, but on a small scale. The *zanāna*, a square-built, flat-roofed house, is enclosed with high brick walls. In front of it, another large oblong building is constructed, in which are the business apartments. The floor is covered with a *farsh*, which is usually a *satranji* or carpet, covered with a white sheet. Large bolsters are placed on this sheet for the convenience of visitors who recline on them, the proprietors occupying a cushion called a *kālin* or *bakiyā*. It has become the fashion to fit up the best room of the house in the European style with sofas, arm-chairs, mirrors, and pictures.

FOOD. Hindus of the highest class ordinarily eat *pūrīs* and *bhājīs*, rice and pulses. *Pūris* are made of flour mixed with water, forming unleavened bread, which is kneaded into very thin cakes and fried in *ghī* or clarified butter. *Bhājīs* are vegetable dishes formed of potatoes, *baiguns*, and greens of sorts, similarly fried. Wheaten flour and *kalāi* pulse, mixed together and prepared like *pūrīs*, are called *kachurīs*. Pigeons and the flesh of young goats are also eaten; but milk, curds, and sweetmeats of various kinds are considered the most dainty food. Middle-class Hindus eat pulses and rice with vegetable curry. On special occasions they make *pūris*, as the higher classes do. Fish is cheap in all parts of Purnea, but is not so much eaten by the Hindus of this district as by those of Lower Bengal. Low class Hindus generally eat rice, greens, called *patuā* or *lāfa*, and occasionally *dāl*. On festive occasions they use *dahi*, *churā*, a preparation of rice, and burnt molasses or *gur*.

The usual diet of the higher class of Muhammadans in Purnea is rice and curry made of fowls, highly seasoned with spices. They generally breakfast at about 11 A.M. or at midday, and dine about 8 or 9 P.M. A few of them take a light meal in the morning, which they call *nāshtā*. A favourite article of food both with rich and poor is curds, mixed with rice and with a small quantity of salt added. Curry is made of meat which has been well washed with water, and then placed for a time in curds. To cook one pound of meat, they place four ounces of *ghī* in a saucepan, and when the *ghī* is melted, spices are added. After a time, the meat with the curds is put in, together with a few sliced onions. The whole is then allowed to simmer on the hearth for a short time, after which the curry is ready for use. The diet of

middle class Musalmāns is very similar to that of Hindus of the same position. A favourite vegetable dish amongst them, called *turshi* (literally sour), is prepared from greens flavoured with *āmchur*, or unripe mangoes dried in the sun. Both Hindus and Musalmâns of the lowest class make a kind of tea, by adding boiling water to the dried leaves of the *patuā* plant, which they drink when attacked by fever. *Sharbat* is much in demand, especially during the hot season; it is a beverage prepared from sugar diluted in water, to which some juice of a green lemon has been added to give it a flavour. *Bhūnjā* or fried rice, *sattu* or pulverized gram, and *ukri* or gram softened in water, are used by the lower classes, both Hindu and Muhammadan.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

AMONG the Indian community the district has an evil reputation for unhealthiness, which is expressed in a common proverb—"*Na zahar khāo, na mahur khāo. Marnā hai, to Puraniā jāo, i.e.,* Don't take poison. You have to die, so go to Purnea." This evil repute is no new thing, for in the *Riyāzu-s-Salātin* (1788) we find the climate described as insalubrious and uncongenial. To this day it is so much dreaded, that people of other districts, especially Bengalis, are afraid to come and settle in the district. "Ask," says a Bengali writer, "any one leaving the railway train at Sahebgunge what place he is coming to, and it is ten to one he will say that he is going to Purneah. Ask again something of the place, and he is sure to change colour and turn pale. This is no doubt ominous to you, if you are for Purneah too. You feel you are going to a penal settlement, where life is death and death a positive relief."* This belief in the unhealthiness of the district is borne out by the statistics of births and deaths collected since 1892, when the present system of mortuary returns was introduced. In the 16 years ending in 1907 the reported deaths outnumbered the births by 39,000; in only seven years was the birth-rate greater than the death-rate; and in the three years 1905-07 Purnea had the unenviable pre-eminence of having the highest death-rate and the greatest excess of deaths over births in the whole of Bengal.

The insalubrity of the district is chiefly due to its physical configuration, for it is a low-lying tract interspersed with shallow swamps, stagnant rivers, and wide stretches of flooded land, which slowly dry up after the rains and form breeding grounds for the anopheles mosquito. The west of the district is, however, far more healthy than the east. The eastern half is a depressed, highly cultivated, alluvial tract, watered by a network of inosculating rivers and containing numerous small marshes. Here the water-supply is derived chiefly from the rivers. The western part

* Guru Lāl Gupta, *Purneah as it is (Rural Sketches)*, 1888.

of the district is higher in level, and is thickly overlaid with sand deposited by the Kosi river in its gradual westward movement. The greater part is open pasture land so sterile as not to be worth cultivating, and crops are grown for the most part near the rivers and in irrigated plots close to the villages. There is considerable interlacing of the channels and branches of the Kosi, which are dry in the hot weather, swampy in the cold weather, and full of water in the rains. The water-supply of this half of the district is chiefly from wells, except where the villages are actually on the banks of a river.

PRINCIPAL DISEASES. Fever.

The greatest mortality is caused by fevers, as may be gathered from the fact that in the seven years 1901-07 the annual death-rate from fevers alone averaged 32·5 per mille out of a total average mortality of 37·9 per mille. Even after making allowance for the fact that the village *chaukīdār* returns under this generic head a number of deaths caused by other illnesses in which a rise of temperature occurs, there can be no doubt that in this district the majority of the deaths are rightly attributed to fever. The prevalence of fever, and especially malarial fever, is, moreover, not of recent date. Thirty years ago, for instance, it was stated in the *Statistical Account of Bengal*:—"Chief among the endemic diseases of Purnea are fevers, intermittent and remittent, with their train of sequelæ, spleen disease, hepatitis, diarrhœa, dysentery, dropsy, and canorum oris. Persons of all ages and both sexes suffer very much from fever, which, in almost every case, is of malarial origin. Children, from the very earliest period of infancy, and, indeed, at the breast, are subject to remittent fever; and in such instances rarely live to the time of the second dentition, and often die long before, from sloughing of the cheeks and gums. The few who survive and struggle on to the age of puberty have sometimes been known to entirely recover their health, the development of the natural powers about that period producing, especially in the case of females, a most remarkable effect." The causes of fever are not a matter of doubt in Purnea. Nearly everywhere may be found swamps and dead or dying rivers; large tracts are practically old river beds, and a great part of the country is under water in the rains. After their close fever is very rife among the native population, but Europeans enjoy comparative immunity or suffer for a shorter time.

The types of fever most commonly met with in Purnea town are intermittent, remittent, tertian, continued and cachectic. The intermittent type, which is most common, consists of a quotidian fever lasting 4 or 5 days, with complete intermission. It commences with rigors, the temperature rising to

103° or 104,° and eventually falling after profuse sweating—in fact, the true ague attack. In the remittent form there are generally no rigors but a slight cold stage, the temperature immediately rising to 103° or 104.° It generally lasts from 4 or 5 days to a week, temperature seldom coming down to normal during this period. In these cases the culminating type may occur, in which temperature suddenly rises to 105° or 106° and cannot be reduced, notwithstanding all treatment, the patient becoming delirious and dying within about 48 hours. The tertian type is rarer; when it occurs, there is the usual hot, cold and sweating stage. In continued fever the temperature rises to about 101° or 102° at one part of the day and comes down to 99° in the evening, and so on for 10 days or a fortnight. Sometimes there is no second rise of temperature during the 24 hours, *e.g.*, at night. In this type there are no rigors and little or no shivering. There is also very little sweating, and symptoms are absent except for a general feeling of weakness.

Cachectic fever has been observed among the out-patients of the hospital and the poorer classes. There is an irregular fever not rising very high and then only for 2 or 3 days. After remaining at normal for a longer or shorter period, there is the same short rise and fall, and this may go on for weeks. The patients are generally very anæmic, the spleen and liver enlarged—the former excessively so—and there are all the concomitant signs of anæmia with oedema of the feet and puffiness of the face. Most of these cases appear to be aggravated by want of food, and the majority of those who come to hospital for treatment go away again in a week's time because they have not been rapidly cured. Some of them have a peculiarly malevolent form of fever known as *kālādukha*, whose characteristic symptom is considerable pigmentation of the skin. These cases are generally hopeless, for the patients gradually become more anæmic and die from asthenia.

The reports of the fevers received from the dispensaries in rural areas generally include the above forms together with quartan and double tertian. The latter are comparatively rare, and the most common is evidently the intermittent or quotidian. A fever resembling *Kālā Azār* has been reported from Thākurganj on the north-eastern border of the district close to Jalpāigurī. The Hospital Assistant's report on this type is as follows:—"Some of the cases of enlarged spleen with marked anæmia and debility, attended with intercurrent attacks of fevers, prevalent in this quarter, resemble those of *Kālā Azār*. It is a slow and wasting disease, with great and progressive debility, intercurrent attacks of fever, enlarged spleen, darkening of the complexion,

dropsical affection, etc." It appears that opium eaters suffer less from fever than their neighbours who do not eat opium, but the evidence on this point is not sufficient to make the inference reliable.*

In 1908 an attempt was made to investigate the prevalence of malaria and its causation in the Kishanganj thāna. A medical expert, with a large and qualified staff, conducted the enquiry, but it was soon found to be infructuous for the following reasons. The people did not take kindly to the investigation, and the utmost difficulty was experienced in examining children for enlargement of the spleen. Owing to the opposition of the parents, it was found impossible to obtain blood slides for the endemic index. There was no suitable hospital where a study of the prevailing forms of splenic enlargement could be made. Every assistance was given by the Subdivisional Officer and by a local practitioner with considerable influence, but the difficulties did not disappear, and so it was decided to abandon further enquiry in this thāna and to continue the investigation in the Murshidābād district.

Cholera. Purnea lies within the endemic area of cholera, and has long been notorious for the prevalence of that disease. It is one of those districts in which cholera is believed to have existed prior to the historic epidemic of 1817 ; and in Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal* (1877) it is stated that since 1863 cholera had appeared almost with regularity every second year. Returns specially prepared show that for 33 years at least, viz., from 1859, the earliest year for which statistics are available, to 1891, this rule held good in the main, cholera having been much more prevalent in the odd than in the even years throughout almost all that period. Several of these epidemics, viz., those of 1869, 1873, 1875, 1882 and 1889 were attributed to the Kārāgolā fair. This fair is one of the largest held in Bengal, being usually attended by 30,000 or more people, a number of whom are hillmen, Nepalese, Bhotiās, etc., who go to and return from the fair by road, traversing the entire length of the district. They live under insanitary conditions and fall ready victims to cholera when it breaks out among them.

Coming to more recent times, the mortuary returns compiled since 1892 show that epidemics have been far less frequent, but they broke out in seven of the sixteen years in question, viz., in 1894, in each of the three years 1898-1900, and in each of the

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* This account of the types of fever has been prepared from a note contributed by Captain A. L. Cook, M.B., I.M.S., formerly Civil Surgeon.

three years 1905-07. In the latter three years the death-rate was 5·17, 9·37, and 8·56 per mille respectively; but none of these epidemics was comparable to that of 1900, when over 46,000 persons died of the disease and the death-rate reached the appalling figure of 23·77 per mille. Next to this, the worst epidemic on record was that of 1891, of which the following account is given as illustrative of the etiology of the disease.

Epidemic of 1891.

Previous to the 8th February the whole of the western half of the district was free from cholera of any kind, with the single exception of Arāriā thāna. On the other hand, sporadic cholera was occurring more or less throughout the eastern half of the district, except in Katihār thāna. At the same time, there was nothing like an epidemic anywhere, the total number of deaths from cholera registered in the district during the month of January being only 88. The epidemic undoubtedly broke out among the pilgrims assembled at Manihāri for the bathing festival of the 8th February. This festival was largely attended in consequence of its being the *Ardhodaya Jog*, which only occurs at long intervals, the last occasion on which it was celebrated having been in February 1864. The sanctity of the day is said to be ten million times as great as that of a sun eclipse, and in 1891 the gathering of pilgrims was particularly great in consequence of the belief that this was the last *jog* that would be held on the banks of the Ganges, as by the end of the century the Ganges would lose its sacred character. It seems more or less to have taken everybody by surprise. The railway authorities were not prepared for the enormous quantity of passenger traffic suddenly thrown on their hands, and they were unable to concentrate sufficient rolling-stock to carry the numbers of pilgrims applying for transport; nor were any preparations made in the district for dealing with the sickness which might be expected to occur among the assembled masses.

Thousands of Hindus from Dinājpur, Rangpur, Jalpāigurī and even Assam flocked to the Ganges, the number carried by the railway alone being estimated at 60,000 to 100,000. Thousands more for whom the railway could not provide accommodation, and other thousands too poor to travel by rail, had to walk from their homes and back again—a matter, in the majority of cases, of several days' journey, during which they suffered many privations and hardships, and arrived at their destination in an exhausted condition. All the conditions which favour the development of epidemic disease were thus present—fatigue, overcrowding, exposure, and insufficient and unsuitable food. The epidemic first broke out at Manihāri, and from there rapidly

spread into the neighbouring thānas of Kadwā and Gopālpur, with which railway communication is direct and easy, and so on into the districts of Dinājpur and Rangpur. At the same time, it is evident that this pilgrimage was not the sole cause of the epidemic. Though it was immediately followed by an outburst of cholera, and the disease was imported by returning pilgrims into almost every part of the district, yet in most place it did not at first attain any serious epidemic form. It was not until the end of March and the beginning of April, some six weeks after the pilgrimage, that cholera in an epidemic form was prevalent all over the district.

Regarding the general causes of the epidemic, the following extract from the report submitted by Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. Crawford, I. M. S., then Civil Surgeon of Purnea, is of especial interest :—"I am driven to the conclusion that the epidemic would equally have occurred in the district this year even had no pilgrimage taken place. The only difference probably would have been that it would have commenced six weeks later, and would have caused fewer deaths—about 10 per cent. (roughly) lower than actually took place. The fact that the district has suffered from repeated epidemics of cholera almost every other year for the last thirty years is also in favour of this view. The cause must, therefore, be sought elsewhere, and I can only conclude that the disease spreads partly by general insanitary conditions, and partly owing to some atmospheric condition which at present cannot be defined. Not that I mean to imply that this district is specially insanitary more than any other district, but, to the best of my knowledge, every district in the country offers a plentiful supply of insanitary conditions as pabulum for any epidemic which may spring up. This district, like other Bengal districts, is never at any time entirely free from cholera, so that the cholera germ, if germ there be, is always on the spot ready to flourish and to spread as soon as the conditions which favour its growth come in contact with it, like powder with a spark.

"As far as sanitary surroundings go, it would naturally appear that the western half of the district with its sandy soil, comparatively high and dry, and its water-supply from wells, was in a more healthy condition than the eastern half, with its lower level, swampy soil, and water-supply from rivers and tanks. Yet the western half suffers far more from cholera than the eastern, and although in 1891 the eastern half has suffered

chief or one of the chief causes of the spread of epidemic—the utter carelessness of the lower classes of the population—is as common here as elsewhere. I have seen people in the most abject terror of cholera, yet calmly sleeping, while in health, on the same bedding as a person suffering from the disease, or in the clothing still unwashed of persons who had just died of it. I have also seen people using for drinking or cooking purposes water in which, as they well knew, the bodies of persons dead of cholera had been thrown, when unpolluted or at least apparently unpolluted water was obtainable at a little further distance with a little further expenditure of trouble.

"The usual insanitary conditions to be met with in this country are all found here as elsewhere, the water-supply being chiefly from flowing streams and from wells: there is not, however, the same opportunity for using the rapidly drying up water of filthy little tanks as there is in Eastern Bengal. The water in the wells, however, sinks to its lowest level in the hot weather. . . . In this connection I may observe that Surgeon-Major L. A. Waddell, in his report on the epidemic of 1889, notices that almost all the deaths occurred among the lowest classes of the population. This he attributed to the fact that those who are more well-to-do have private wells of their own, which they take care to keep free from pollution. In this year's epidemic also it is noticeable that the mortality has been almost entirely confined to the lowest classes, and the reason given seems likely to be true. Other practices which may be considered likely to help in spreading the disease are eating unripe fruit and fishing in muddy water. As tanks and pools dwindle, it, of course, becomes easier to catch the fish in them, and one sees crowds of men and boys running about in shallow water, ankle deep, of course stirring up the mud till the water becomes of the consistency of cream, sipping this liquid mud when thirsty from their exertions, and afterwards eating fish whose flesh is impregnated with mud. The people themselves for the most part attribute the outbreak of epidemic cholera to the rambles of a malignant demon who stalks through the country, more especially at night, seeking whom he may devour. This idea has some practical importance, as it causes them to shut up their houses at nightfall as completely as possible, a practice which in the hot weather is far from being conducive either to the preservation of the health of the healthy or the recovery of the sick. I have more than once heard of the taking of the census in February given as the reason for the excessive activity of the cholera demon this year."

Goitre is very common in some parts of the district, and presents itself under the most dissimilar conditions. The two areas in which it is most met with lie one due west of Purnea along the bank of the Kosi, and the other to the south-west in the direction of Kadwā and Manihāri. Most of the former tract is an open high country, with very few marshes or stagnant pools and a soil essentially sandy. The latter is a low, damp, inundated country, with an excess of vegetation and swamp, and a soil of the heaviest clay. The points in which they coincide are that they are about equally well cultivated and have a population of Hindus and Musalmāns mixed in about the same proportion, who have very similar habits of life. The drinking water in both tracts is obtained chiefly from wells, but partly also from dammed-up branches of streams which have their origin in the Lower Himālayas. The nature of the strata to which the wells reach, and from which water is derived, is not certain; but there is reason to believe that calcareous beds underlie both the clay of the south-east and the sand of the west. **Goitre.**

The enlargements of the throat are of every description, small and excessively large, soft and indurated, smooth and nodulate. They are also occasionally partial, only a single lobe of the thyroid gland being enlarged. They sometimes attain such a size as to interfere with respiration, in a few cases even to such an extent as to cause suffocation. The disease often gives rise to a strange reverberation in the throat like subdued roaring, so that the approach of a person suffering from it may be perceived at some distance. Females seem to suffer most from goitre; nor is it confined to the human subject, for it has been noticed that in the village of Barorā not only are the inhabitants all more or less affected by it, but dogs (even young puppies), horses, and fowls often have thyroid swellings. The prevalence of goitre in Purnea is noticed as early as 1788 in the *Riyāzu-s-Salātin*, which refers to it as follows:—"Tumours of the throat in men and women generally, as well as in wild beasts and birds, are common."

Other common affections are bowel complaints and skin diseases. The former are often the result of the weakening action of fever on the constitution; but in the hot weather, and also when the rice seedlings are being planted out, and the labourers have to remain all day up to their knees in water, dysentery and diarrhœa appear without fever. In the summer months they are often caused by unripe fruit, and frequently prepare the way for outbreaks of cholera. Chicken-pox is fairly common, measles also **Other diseases.**

occur, and a few cases of typhoid fever have been reported. Small-pox breaks out every year, but rarely in a severe epidemic form, the worst epidemic on record since 1892 occurring in 1907 when it caused 1,111 deaths. Plague has so far not established itself, the total number of deaths in the 7 years 1901-07 being only 16.

Infirmities.

The marginal table shows the number of persons afflicted per 100,000 of the population, as recorded at the last census.

	Male.	Female.
Deaf-mutes	... 130	84
Blind	... 96	85
Lepers	... 70	21
Insane	... 25	13

Deaf-mutism is unusually prevalent and is most rife along the course of the Kamlā river, especially in thānas Purnea, Arāriā and Amur Kasbā, where the average incidence is double that of the other parts of the district. Then follow Forbesganj and Katihār, which also contain a small portion of the course of the same river, and Gopālpur. Gopālpur is on the left bank of the Mahānandā, but the other thānas adjoining this river have a relatively low proportion of deaf-mutes. As in other districts in North Bihār which are watered by Himālayan rivers, the infirmity is frequently associated with cretinism and goitre, the latter being also common along the course of the Kamlā. Its primary causes seem to be inflammation of the ears, produced by damp and malaria, and subsequent sympathy of the organs of speech.

Blindness is fairly common and is chiefly due to neglected inflammation of the eyes, poorness of constitution and the application of caustic remedies. The most common cases are those in which senile decay causes cataract and various forms of ulceration, especially of the cornea, which though easily amenable to treatment in their earlier stages, are seldom submitted for treatment until vision has been hopelessly destroyed, and it is too late for any treatment to be of use.

Leprosy does not exist among the people to any great extent, and the census statistics show that it is not increasing. The cases are scattered, and not confined to any particular locality, the subjects being chiefly beggars, mostly males and unmarried. There is no evidence to show that a fish diet, good or bad, induces the disease, fish not being a staple food in this district. More Muhammadan lepers are to be seen than Hindus, and, among the latter, men of the lowest classes are most often afflicted. The persons who appear to suffer most are those who live upon a mixed diet of fish and meat, and are not particular whether it is tainted or not. The much smaller number of females shown as lepers is

probably due to the existence of the *zanāna* system, and a not unnatural unwillingness on the part of the men who make the returns to put down their female relatives as lepers.

Insanity is more common than in any Bihār district except Patna. Its prevalence diminishes in a remarkable way proceeding from east to west. Thus, in the Kishanganj subdivision, which adjoins Jalpāigurī, the number of insane per 100,000 is only 26, as against 71 in Jalpāigurī; in the Arāriā subdivision it is 14, and in the Supaul subdivision of Bhāgalpur, which adjoins it on the west, it is barely 7.

VACCINATION. Vaccination is compulsory only in municipal areas, but has made satisfactory progress in rural areas. In 1908-09 the number of persons successfully vaccinated was 49,851, representing 27·03 per mille of the population; while the proportion in the case of infants was 50·16 per cent. The average annual number of successful operations in the preceding 5 years was 58,726 or 31·84 per mille of the total population.

MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS. In 1877 there was only one charitable dispensary in the district, viz., that at Purnea. This was established in 1847, but in 1877, in spite of the lapse of 30 years, it had no better building than one composed of matting and grass. It was converted into a *pucca* building 15 years ago and has now five wards. In 1908 a separate out-patient department was added, called "The Lea Dispensary" after Mr. J. H. Lea, I.C.S., a former Collector of Purnea, leaving the main building entirely for the reception of in-patients. In 1900 there were one out-door and four in-door dispensaries, and since then 11 out-door dispensaries have been added; but the Purnea Female Hospital was amalgamated with the Purnea Sadar Dispensary at the end of 1905, so that there are now 15 dispensaries, of which four receive both in-patients and out-patients, while eleven afford out-door relief only. The former four dispensaries are :—(1) at Purnea with 16 beds for male and 4 for female patients; (2) at Kishanganj with 6 beds for male and 4 for female patients; (3) at Arāriā (Basantpur) with 4 and 2 beds respectively; and (4) at Katihār with 3 and 2 beds respectively. The other dispensaries are situated at (1) Purnea city, (2) Manihāri, (3) Muhamdiā, (4) Forbesganj, (5) Kursakanta, (6) Muhammadpur, (7) Khagrā, (8) Rāmganj, (9) Bahādurganj, (10) Thākurganj and (11) Champānagar. There is also an Eastern Bengal State Railway dispensary at Katihār. The Khagra and Rāmganj dispensaries are under the Khagrā estate, the heirs to the Khagrā estate having taken over the management in 1906, when they attained their majority and the estate was released by the Court of Wards. There was formerly a

dispensary at Rāmnagar, but it was closed in 1905, and a new dispensary at Champānagar was opened.

The people, strange as it may appear in so unhealthy a district, are said to be not very eager to avail themselves of medical assistance, and the dispensaries are not so largely attended as might be expected. This, however, is a feature not peculiar to Purnea, for in the Bhāgalpur Division, as a whole, public medical aid appears to be more in demand, if not more appreciated, in the healthy than in the unhealthy tracts, where the people are presumably used to illness and are imbued with the apathy which constant fever produces.

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

THE district is a low alluvial plain subject to floods caused by the many rivers flowing southwards, as well as by the overflow of the Ganges. For practical purposes it may be divided into three different tracts in which agricultural conditions vary considerably, viz., (1) the country west of the Panār river, (2) a triangular tract in the extreme south-east, of which the three corners lie at Dingraha, Manihāri and Bārsoi, and (3) the remainder of the country on the east of the Panār. The extent of cultivation is much larger, and the population is also more dense in the eastern than in the western tract; while the triangular subdivision above referred to partakes of the characteristics of both the main divisions, being less open than the western portion and more sparsely cultivated than the eastern portion. The eastern portion is intersected by rivers and water channels, contains numerous marshes, and has a loamy soil rich in alluvial deposit. The principal crops cultivated in this tract are rice and jute. In the western portion the soil is sandy, owing to the frequent changes in the course of the Kosi, which has gradually moved westward and buried under a deep layer of sand what was once a very fertile rice tract. In this portion of the district, moreover, *bhadoi* and *rabi* crops are extensively cultivated, besides winter rice and, in the north, jute. There are also wide stretches of waste land and grassy plains, which afford pasturage to great herds of cattle.

IRRIGATION.

Irrigation is little practised and little needed. The rainfall is ordinarily ample, and it begins early. There are usually storms from March onwards; rain falls in April and May, which is of great service to jute and indigo; and the monsoon is well established in June. The soil also in most parts retains moisture well, and there are numerous rivers and marshes, no less than 5 per cent. of the total area being under water. Besides this, the rivers usually rise early in May owing to the melting of the Himâlayan snows, and the dry channels also carry down turbid water from the hills. These floods are often disastrous, so that Purnea has more to fear from inundation than from deficient rainfall.

Enquiries made during the course of the recent settlement show that the area under irrigation is only 1·5 per cent. of the net cropped area, and that practically the only crops irrigated are tobacco and other crops, such as garden produce, grown on homestead lands. These crops are watered from *kutcha* or temporary wells sunk in the plot requiring artificial irrigation. Such a well costs very little to make, as water is usually found at a depth of 10 or 12 feet even in the cold season, except in Damdahā thānā where the sub-soil is too sandy to retain moisture long. If not lined with earthenware rings, these wells do not last longer than the next rainy season. Occasionally onions and similar crops are raised on the slopes of a partially dry tank and are irrigated from it, but tanks are rarely used because they rapidly silt up, unless constantly looked after.

SOILS. The soil is all alluvial, and its character is determined by the rivers, that in the country watered by the Kosi being sandy, and that watered by the Mahānandā being loamy. There are different terms for the different soils according to their composition. A clay soil is known as *karāri*, but there is very little of it, except in the south-east. Another name given to a soil in which clay predominates is *matiār*. Loamy soil is called *doas* or *mānsimāti*, and a sandy soil is *baluār* or simply *balu*. In a considerable area the soil is generally so poor, that every few years the fields are left fallow and given rest for a number of years to enable them to regain their fertility.

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS. The statistics prepared in the course of the recent settlement show that the net cropped area is 1,754,735 acres or 61 per cent. of the total area, and that the area cropped more than once is 515,060 acres or 22 per cent. of the district area. The area of uncultivated land is unusually large, aggregating 1,116,944 acres (or 39 per cent. of the total area), of which 158,516 acres or 5 per cent. are current fallow, 694,770 acres or 24 per cent. are cultivable land outside current fallow, and 263,658 acres or 10 per cent. are uncultivable land. As regards the different crops of the year, 56 per cent. of the net cropped area is under *aghani*, 39 per cent. is under *rabi*, and 34 per cent. is under *bhadoi*. The *aghani* crop consists almost entirely of winter rice. The *rabi* crop is mainly a crop of oilseeds, in which mustard predominates; it consequently adds but little to the supply of food grains in the district, but is of considerable value and importance. The *bhadoi*, though it occupies a smaller area, includes the very valuable jute crop. The area under food crops is 1,732,376 acres or 76 per cent. of the total cropped area and 98 per cent. of the net cropped area; while the total area under non-food crops is 537,419 acres, which is only 23

per cent. of the total cropped area and 30 per cent. of the net cropped area.

The following table shows the acreage of the principal crops and their percentage to the net cropped area. PRINCIPAL CROPS.

Crop.	Acreage.	Percentage.	Crop.	Acreage.	Percentage.
Winter rice	899,212	51·24	Wheat	69,388	3·95
Other cereals and pulses.	72,871	4·15	Barley	21,293	1·27
			Gram	19,880	1·13
Sugarcane	8,279	·47	*Arhar*	6,403	·36
Other *aghani* crops.	2,741	·14	Other cereals and pulses.	140,129	7·93
			Linseed	35,978	2·10
Total *Aghani* crops.	983,103	56·00	Mustard	308,506	17·58
			Other oilseeds	3,054	·17
			Condiments and spices.	5,990	·34
				7,060	·89
Autumn rice	390,102	22·23	Fibres		
Maize	40,429	2·30	Tobacco	22,759	1·29
Maruā	12,300	·70	Garden produce	10,710	·61
Kodo	2,690	·15	Potatoes	6,782	·38
Other cereals and pulses.	19,836	1·13	Mango groves	22,582	1·29
			Other crops	3,523	·20
Jute	115,462	6·58			
Other fibres	1,478	·08	Total *Rabi* crops	684,037	38·99
Indigo	20,358	1·16			
Total *Bhadoi* crops.	602,655	34·33			

Rice is the all important staple of Purnea accounting for 73·47 per cent of the net cropped area. *Aghani* or winter rice is usually cultivated on low land, although some species are grown on comparatively high soils. During the early months of the spring, every opportunity is taken to prepare land which does not bear a second crop by repeated ploughings. In May, when there is usually a good shower of rain, a nursery-ground, called *bichrarā*, is ploughed four times, and the seed scattered thickly over it. When the seedlings make their appearance, another field is prepared for transplanting. By this time the rainy season has set in, and the field is dammed up by means of low ridges, so as to retain the water. It is then repeatedly ploughed until the water penetrates the soil, and the whole is reduced to a thick mud. After this, the young rice is then taken from the nursery and transplanted in rows about 9 inches apart. Much *aghani* rice is also sown broadcast, but this is a less productive, though cheaper, method of cultivation. If there are early showers in April and May sufficient to enable the nursery beds to be prepared thoroughly, nearly all the sowings of the year are subsequently transplanted. FOOD CROPS. Rice.

But if, as often happens, there is no rain until the regular rains begin in the middle of June, the area of broadcast rice is greatly increased, and beds of seedlings are found only near rivers, tanks, and other sources of irrigation. Rice which is sown broadcast is called *lathahān*, and this manner of sowing is styled *bāogi* to distinguish it from *ropā* or transplanting. The harvest takes place in November and the beginning of December, except in years in which the rains extend far into October, when the ripening of the grain is proportionately delayed. No less than seventy different varieties of *aghani* rice are reported.

Bhadoi rice is generally sown on high ground. The field is ploughed 10 or 12 times after the first showers of spring, and the seed is sown broadcast in April or May. As soon as the young plants are six inches high, the land is harrowed for the purpose of thinning the crop and clearing it of weeds. The crop is harvested in August or September, as it ripens, and is usually followed by a winter crop of pulse, oil-seeds and wheat. Some late varieties admit of pulse being sown amongst them when nearly ripe. Land yielding *bhadoi* rice also often produces a crop of *chīnā* in the spring, before the rice is sown. Thirty-two varieties of this rice have been reported.

Boro or *bora* rice is grown on rather low lands, such as the shelving banks of rivers and marshes, but according to the settlement statistics it is raised on only 160 acres. It is sown in November and reaped in May.

Rice harvest. Rice is reaped by cutting off the ears (*sīsh*), with about a foot and a half of the stalk attached. It is then tied up in sheaves or bundles (*bojhā*), and carried to the threshing-floor (*khāmār*), which is usually prepared by merely cutting off the surface turf. A pole or bamboo (called *menhā*) is driven into the ground in the centre of the cleared area, round which the sheaves are placed, and a number of cattle are then brought up, tied neck to neck to the pole. These are driven round and round, and effectually tread out the grain, separating it from the stalk and the ear. The stalk left (*leruā* or *poāl*), which after the grain has been threshed out is called *daonī*, is carefully stacked for the use of cattle when pasturage is scarce. The grain is now collected in a heap on the threshing ground, and the process of winnowing (*osaunī*) is proceeded with. This is effected by lifting a quantity in a basket and gradually letting it fall to the earth while a moderate wind is blowing. The grain falls on the ground, while stray straws, dust and chaff, being lighter, are blown away to a distance. Thus purified, the rice is fit to be stored.

Store-houses are called *thek*, *bākharī* or *bādārī* if they are small and round, and *munahar* if they are large square granaries. They are merely thatched houses, raised from the ground on blocks of wood or bamboos, on which the flooring, also of bamboo, rests. The inside of these repositories is covered with a coating of fine clay, mixed with cow-dung, as otherwise the rice would be liable to suffer from damp. The grain is deposited and taken out, as occasion may require, through an aperture just large enough to allow the ingress and egress of one person.

Paddy or unhusked rice is shelled and converted into rice, or *chāul*, in two ways, called *ushnā* and *ārwā*. In the *ushnā* method, the grain is first boiled in water until the shells of the paddy split. It is then taken off the fire, permitted to cool, well dried in the sun, and pounded in a mortar or *ukhlī*, if a small quantity is being prepared, or in a *dhenkī*, if the quantity is large. The husk is next separated from the grain by means of a winnowing sieve, and the rice is fit for use. The *ārwā* method is considered to yield sweeter rice than the other, as the rice is merely pounded without being boiled, and, after being cleaned from the husked chaff, is fit for use.

Preparations of rice.

Khai is obtained from unhusked rice by roasting it in a pan of heated sand, which bursts the grain and makes the rice swell out. It is also called *lāwā*. *Murkī* is made by mixing the *khai* with boiling *jāgrī*, or brown sugar, and then drying it in the open air for an hour or two. In making *murī*, the unhusked rice is steeped in water for 12 hours, and is then taken out and boiled. These operations are repeated, after which the rice is dried in the sun and is ready for husking. The cleaned rice is next fried in an earthen pan, and when half cooked, is taken out and thrown into hot sand and well stirred with a stick for a short time. The sand is strained off through a sieve, after which the *murī* is fit for use. *Churā* is made by boiling unhusked rice and then frying it for a few minutes in a pan; it is then taken out and put in a *dhenkī* or mortar, and pounded till it is quite flat. The best kind of *churā* is made of half-ripe rice. *Chāulbhājā*, as the name implies, is merely rice parched in an earthen pan with a little salt. It is a cheap article of food, and is eaten extensively by the poorer classes.

Other cereals.

Wheat is largely cultivated in the west and south-west of the district in thānas Damdahā and Korhā. It requires a clayey soil of medium elevation, and is of two varieties, one a white kind called *dudhi*, the other a small red-grained kind called *jameli*. Indian corn or maize (*makāi*) forms an important article of food among the poor. It is eaten half ripe by roasting the cobs and

cakes are also made from the flour obtained by grinding. Barley and oats are cultivated chiefly for local consumption. *Sattu* flour is prepared from parched barley, as well as from other grains, and is largely consumed by all classes. There is a distinct festival held in honour of this article of food called *Sattuāni*.

There are several kind of millets commonly grown. *Janerā* is the large millet (*Sorghum Vulgare*), of which there are two varieties, a red kind called *rāksā* and a white variety called *larkāliā*. A coarse flour is prepared from the seeds and is made into cakes by the poorer classes. Among small millets may be mentioned *kauni* (*Setaria Italica*), *chinā* (*Panicum miliaceum*), *sāmā* (*P. Crusgalli*), *maruā* (*Eleusine Coracana*), and *kodo* (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), of which the most important are *maruā* and *kodo*. *Kauni* and *sāmā* are husked and eaten, forming a poor substitute for rice. *Maruā* is pounded into flour, and cakes are prepared from it. *Chinā* is parched into *marha*, a light food used by the poor.

Pulses. Gram is the most important pulse crop, accounting for 1·1 per cent. of the net cropped area. Other pulses grown in the district are :—(1) *kurthi* (*Dolichos biflorus*), (2) *kalāi* (*Phaseolus radiatus*), (3) *rahar* (*Cajanus indicus*), (4) *meth* (*Phaseolus aconitifolius*), (5) *khesāri* (*Lathyrus sativus*), (6) *mung* (*Phaseolus Mungo*), (7) *masuri* (*Cicer Lens*) and (8) *borā* (*Vigna Catiang*).

NON-FOOD CROPS. Oil-seeds predominate among the non-food crops. The chief crops of this character are rape seed, locally called *tori*, mustard (*rainchi*), linseed, and *til*, the sesamum of commerce. The castor-oil plant, locally known as *andi*, is also grown on sandy soil in the south.

Jute. A more valuable crop, however, is jute, the cultivation of which has extended largely of late years. Before 1867 there was scarcely any jute cultivation in the district, but in that year it received an impetus from the great demand for gunny bags ; and by 1873 about 15,000 acres were under the crop. Since then the area under the crop has increased enormously till it now (1908) amounts to 118,044 acres. As the area under rice, viz., 1,289,474 acres, is nearly eleven times as great, it is clear that in Purnea there is no ground for the belief that jute has displaced rice to any large extent. Moreover, in some localities where the lands are very good, an *aghani* rice crop and a *bhadoi* jute crop are raised from the same land. "It means", writes Mr. Byrne, "continuous and rather exhausting labour, as the jute crop needs careful weeding and the soil needs careful preparation beforehand. Then the cutting of the jute, the transport to the steeping tank or pond, the retting, and the sending it to market require unremitting labour during the most trying season of the year. It requires very hard labour, again,

to get rid of the jute stumps and roots from the ground in time to transplant the rice seedlings. Still, the profits are enormous with even an average outturn, when jute and rice are selling at present prices. Five maunds of jute worth Rs. 40 and fifteen maunds of paddy worth Rs. 50 can be got from one acre of this *dhānpatuā* land as it is called. Deducting rent, cultivation and other charges, a net profit of Rs. 60 could be got from one acre of such land."*

The jute crop is most extensively grown in the north-east of the district in the Kishanganj subdivision, where thānas Bahādurganj and Islāmpur account for 53,000 acres, while Arāriā thāna in the north-west and Kadwā thāna in the south-east come next with 12,000 acres each. The fields generally selected for the crop are high rich lands bordering the banks of rivers and *khāls*. The land is prepared by repeated ploughing, harrowing, and weeding in March and April; manure, in the shape of ashes and cow-dung, is used, but sparingly. The seed is sown broadcast in May after the first heavy shower of rain, after which the crop does not require much attention, except that care must be taken to prevent water from lodging in the field, as it rots the stem near the root and destroys the plant. When the young plants are three or five inches high, the land is sometimes weeded and harrowed by means of an implement called *pansi*. The plants are cut about October, before the cold season sets in, by which time they are stout and strong and from 5 to 10 feet in height. As soon as they are sufficiently grown and are about to blossom, they are cut off at about two inches from the root. The stalks are then formed into small bundles, immersed in a pond, ditch or other standing water, and left to steep. The steeping process is called retting.

While the bundles are under water, they are examined from time to time to test how far decomposition has progressed, and as soon as it is found that the fibres peel off readily, the bundles are taken out of the water and put in hand for the separation of the fibre. The process of separation most generally followed is to beat or shake the stalks in the water in which they are steeped till the glutinous substance in the bark is entirely washed away. The fibre is then dried in the sun, and, when dry, is made up into hanks and is ready for the market. The ryot carries the bundles, into which the hanks of the fibre are made up, to the nearest village market, or to large marts, according to local circumstances, and there sells it to traders, who take the produce away and, in their turn, dispose of it to wholesale dealers. Petty traders also

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* *Purnea Settlement Report (1908).*

go about from homestead to homestead, making purchases of the fibre, which they either dispose of on their own account or make over to the merchants from whom they have received advances.

In Purnea jute is known as *patuā* and is subdivided into four species, *viz.*, (1) *hathiyā*, (2) *bhadāyā*. (3) *muniāsi* and (4) *bhaunachak*. The first and third are the round-headed variety known as *Corchorus capsularis*, which thrives in low wet lands, while the other two are the long-podded variety called *Corchorus olitorius*. A dwarfish variety called *chirāmārā* is also grown by the lower classes as a vegetable and does not yield fibre.

Other fibres. Fibres are also obtained from *munj* grass, the Deccan hemp (*Hibiscus caunabonis*) called *chauna*, and *san* hemp (*Crotolaria juncea*) known locally as *gorsan*. *Chauna* is cultivated together with jute, and the fibres are sold as *patuā*. *San* hemp requires a high-lying soil of alluvial deposit and is raised extensively along the river Panār. It yields a fine fibre suitable for making ropes and fishing nets, which commands a high price, as much as Rs. 16 a maund being obtained. Cotton is almost unknown, being grown on only 19 acres.

Tobacco. The cultivation of tobacco has been of importance in Purnea for over a century. As early as the year 1789 the Collector reported that the quantity of tobacco annually produced in Purnea district was, according to the most probable conjecture, not less than 50,000 maunds, of which 30,000 were exported to Murshidābād and Calcutta. The subject of tobacco cultivation seems to have received considerable attention at that time, as in the following year experiments were made with foreign seed received from Calcutta. In 1877 the area under the crop was estimated at 15,000 acres; and it has now risen to 24,000 acres in spite of bad prices and the competition of jute. The chief localities in which the crop is cultivated are the high loamy ridges which are frequent between the old beds of the Kosi and the Panār, and between the Kankai and Mahānandā, the best tobacco being grown on the upland strip of country extending from the town of Purnea northward and somewhat westward to Forbesganj. The soil farther to the east, which is richer in moisture, is said to be not so well adapted for its cultivation. The variety of tobacco cultivated in Purnea is that known as *vilayati* (*Nicotiana rustica*), which has completely superseded the *deshi* variety (*Nicotiana tabacum*).

The seed is sown in a nursery in the month of Aswin, *i. e.*, early in October, and the seedlings are ready for transplantation in about a month. During this period the plant is very delicate and is easily killed by heavy rain or strong winds. To protect it, the cultivator usually has mats and straw ready to place over

the plant on the appearance of unfavourable weather. When transplanted, the seedlings are set out in rows a foot apart and at about the same distance from each other in each row. As soon as the young plants are five or six inches high, it is necessary to nip off the top of the central shoot, about half a dozen leaves being left, in which the whole strength of the plant is concentrated. This process of suckering is repeated 3 or 4 times. The plants are harvested entire when the leaves become crisp and spotted, being cut in February if the transplantation takes place in November, and in March or early in April, if it takes place in December. After being cut, the plants are left in the fields for 4 days or so, and are then carried to a grassy plot, where they are spread out in the sun to dry, being gathered into small heaps at night. After a month or so the plants are taken home, and the leaves are separated from the stems and tied into "hands" of 6 or 7 leaves each.

The process of sweating or fermentation now begins. A number of bamboos are spread on the floor of the house, some straw is placed upon them to keep off the damp, and the tobacco is piled up in heaps of 10 or 15 maunds over the straw. The temperature rises as fermentation proceeds, and the degree of heat is felt by the hand. When the proper temperature is reached, the heap is broken up and re-arranged to prevent overheating, this process being repeated two or three times at intervals of 5 to 10 days. If the leaves are ever found too dry during this operation, they are sprinkled with straw dipped in water.

There is no rotation, but tobacco is grown on the same land year after year; indeed, the longer the field is under tobacco, the better is the outturn and the quality of the tobacco said to be. Manure in the form of cow-dung is, however, liberally applied; and, apart from this, the best homestead lands, on which cattle are tethered during the remainder of the year, are generally selected for tobacco cultivation. As soon as the crop is cut, the plot is weeded and again turned into a cattle pen till the next year's cultivation commences. The crop is liable to an insect pest called simply *pillu*. This is a black grub, about 2 inches long, which hides itself during the day in the ground and comes out at night, especially in cloudy weather, and bores into the stems. Whenever a plant suddenly begins to wither, the ryots look for the insect at the root of the plant and dig it out and kill it.

Indigo.

Indigo, with an area of 20,752 acres, is grown chiefly in thānas Damdahā, Korhā and Katihār. Its cultivation is declining, but it has played such an important part in the economic history of the

district that a detailed account of it will be given in another chapter.

Sugarcane. Sugarcane is cultivated, more or less, all over the district except in the south, where the soil is not suited for its growth. The best variety is called *largari*; it has a white bark and a soft juicy stem. The other most common varieties are *khagana*, which has a thin red barked stem and scanty juice, and *bhalli*, which has a stem thick at the base and tapering upwards.

VEGETABLES. Vegetables are cultivated fairly extensively, potatoes alone being grown on 6,950 acres. Among the many varieties common in the district the following may be mentioned. Pumpkins (*kadu*) are sown in October and June and gathered in the next April and October respectively, while red pumpkins (*kadimā* or *konrhā*) are cultivated in the rainy season only. A ripe pumpkin, if carefully kept, will last for several months after being gathered. Cucumbers (*khīrā*) grow almost throughout the year, and are generally gathered twice, from June to August and from October to November. Like other species of the cucurbitaceous order, they are grown on high clayey soil. Other common vegetables are the *tarbuj* or water melon, the cucumber called *kākri* when green and *phuti* when ripe, and the *karelā* or bitter gourd, which is only used for cooking. Among edible roots the following are cultivated:—*suthni*, sweet potatoes (*sakarkand*) and *misrikand*, which is considered a cooling food. The common arum called *kachu* is grown on high sandy soil and is of two varieties—one sown in May and cut in February, the other sown in July and reaped in the following May. *Mānkachu* is cultivated on the same kind of land and is also an article of food. Other popular vegetables are brinjals, onions, garlic and beans; and favourite condiments are chillies, aniseed and coriander. During the winter from December to March the vegetable market is full. Besides country carrots, radishes, beans, brinjals and potatoes, it is not an uncommon sight to find different varieties of European vegetables, such as cabbages, carrots, turnips and tomatoes, offered for sale.

FRUITS. Mango trees are extensively grown in the district, the area of mango groves being altogether 22,582 acres. Large as this area appears, it is far less than in other districts of North Bihār, possibly because a large proportion of the population is Muhammadan. It is at least noticeable that most mango gardens are found in the west, where there is a predominance of Hindus, with whom the planting of mango groves is an act of religious merit. The fruit is far inferior to that of the Mālda mango, and the description of it given by Buchanan Hamilton still applies to the most common species, viz., "execrable, sour, resinous, fibrous and full of insects."

Other fruit trees are of the same species as are usual in other parts of Bihār, such as the jack (*kānthāl*), *bel* (*Ægle Marmelos*), *līchī* (*Nephelium litchi*), *tāl* (*Borassus flabellifer*) and *khajur* (*Phoenix sylvestris*). The guava grows in abundance, and peaches are found in orchards. Among other fruits may be mentioned the plantain, lime, pineapple, *jām* (*Eugenia Jambolana*), *bair* (*Zizyphus Jujuba*), *saripha* or custard apple, *ātā* or bull's heart and *gulāb-jām* or rose-apple. Pomegranates (*ānār*) of an inferior kind are grown, and also the *āmrā* or hog plum, which is not much eaten, though another variety called the *bilāti āmrā* finds a ready sale. The fruit of the tamarind (*imli*) is used only for cooking; and that of the papaya (*papīta*) is not much prized. The betel-nut (*supāri*), on the other hand, is common and highly appreciated. The *singhāra* nut is also found in abundance.

EXTENSION OF CULTIVATION. The earliest estimate of the area under cultivation was made a century ago by Buchanan Hamilton, whose figures go to show that 67·3 per cent. of the area was cultivated, 7·2 per cent. was cultivable and 25·5 per cent. was uncultivable. The figures can be regarded only as approximate, and are somewhat surprising, as showing that cultivation was more extensive than would have been expected at that time. It is noticeable, however, that Buchanan Hamilton seems to have been impressed by the density of the population and the abundant harvest reaped, and that he refers to "the immense population by which the country is overwhelmed." A careful estimate of the area under cultivation was made in 1876 by Sir A. P. (now Lord) MacDonnell, whose conclusion was that 75 per cent. of the total area was under cultivation, 11 per cent. was cultivable and 14 per cent. was uncultivable. This estimate appears to have been too sanguine, for the recent survey and settlement show that only 66 per cent. is actually under cultivation or current fallow, while 24 per cent. is cultivable, and 9 per cent. unfit for cultivation.

The large area in which cultivation is possible, but which has not yet been brought under the plough, shows that the agricultural resources of the district are undeveloped. This appears to be mainly due to the sparseness of the population, which again is to some extent the result of the unhealthiness of the district. It must be remembered, moreover, that a considerable area is given up to pasturage and that the ravages of the river Kosi prevent the advance of the plough in a large area, the extent of cultivation in the west of the district being dependent on the vagaries of that mischievous river. Thus, a century ago the Korhā thāna was waste and covered with useless scrub jungle owing to its inroads, while Damdahā was the most fertile and densely populated part

of the district. Since then Damdahā has suffered from the westward march of the Kosi, and large tracts have relapsed into jungle. It is only indeed within the last 25 years, since the Kosi began to swing back to the east, that settlers have begun to come back and open out the land by cultivation.

CATTLE. Purnea has long been noted for its great herds of cattle. Walter Hamilton, for instance, in his *Description of Hindostan* (1820) wrote:—"Cattle are an important article of stock, and it is hence that Bengal is supplied with a great proportion of the carriage bullocks; but the fine cattle used in the artillery are not bred in this district, although usually termed Purner bullocks, being from further west.... The herds of cattle and buffaloes are so numerous that all the resources of the country would be unequal to their support were it not for the adjacent wilds of the Morang." At the present day, the cattle of Purnea are of an inferior breed, being small, thin and weedy. One cause of this, apart from want of care and selection in breeding, seems to be the practice of using cows as plough cattle, which has a bad effect on young stock. This practice is common in those parts of the district where Muhammadans predominate, and was only given up by the Rājbansis three years ago. Moreover, they are overworked and ill-cared for, especially by the Muhammadans in the east; they are not well-fed during the hot weather, and milk is got with difficulty. Good cart bullocks are imported from Chaprā and Tirhut, the principal markets being the Khagrā, Islāmpur and Madanpur fairs in this district and the Alawākhawa fair in Dinājpur. There are also smaller cattle markets at Ichāmati, Phulberiā (near Kasbā), Chandardihi, Dharamganj, Phulberiā (near Bībīganj) and Gandharbadānga. In the vast grass prairies on the banks of the Kosi and Ganges, fine buffaloes are bred in large numbers, the *arens* or long-horned variety, which are said to contain a strain of the wild buffalo, being more common in the south, and the *bhangris* or short-horns in the north. Sheep are bred by the Gareri shepherd caste round Katihār and Saifganj; they are a long-tailed, short-horned variety said to have been imported originally from the hilly country south of Monghyr. Goats are very numerous owing to the large proportion of Muhammadans in the population. Horses and ponies are extensively used for riding and as pack ponies, but the *ekkā* pony of Tirhut is unknown, probably owing, in part at least, to the liability of most roads to inundation.

PASTURAGE. Pasturage grounds are of greater extent in Purnea than in any other tract of equal size in Bengal or Bihār. One of the most marked physical characteristics of the district is the great

grassy plains or *rāmnās* that surround the headquarters station, and extend nearly to the northern and western boundary. These expanses of country are used during the rains as pasture grounds, and form valuable properties. To give an idea of their extent, the plateau from Purnea to Matiāri, about 40 miles in length and 6 miles in breadth, is practically all grazing ground. During the cold and hot weather from the end of October to the middle of June, they are left as open commons, on which anyone's cattle may browse, the sandy soil producing very scanty vegetation at these seasons. With the first shower of the rains, however, the owners take a greater interest in their property. They set up a bamboo in each field, an operation known as *chheka denā* and *jhandāgār denā*, which is a sign that occupation has been resumed, and that all cattle found trespassing will be sent to the nearest pound. This is also usually to be regarded as a notification that the land is to let. The Goālās or cowherds soon come forward; and the demand increases as the floods rise along the Kosi *chars*, the Ganges *diāras*, and the low lands adjoining them. The lease usually runs to the following Hindu festival of Dīwāli in October, after which the pasture grounds revert to their old condition of common land. They then no longer afford sufficient sustenance for large herds, and the Goālās drive off their cattle to the Tarai of Nepāl or to the low lands in *pargana* Dharampur and along the Ganges. Most of the two latter tracts are the property of the Mahārājā of Darbhangā, forming what is known as the *Charri Mahāl* or grazing estate. Formerly free grazing in this *mahāl* was allowed to all the cattle owned by resident ryots except buffaloes; and in 1886, when an attempt was made to levy grazing fees for the cattle of other graziers, the local ryots made common cause with them, claiming that all cows, whether their own or not, should be allowed to graze free of charge as sacred animals. At present, a fee of two to eight annas is charged. The Banaili Rāj, however, takes no fee from its own tenants for grazing their cattle on waste lands.

In the western thānas the cattle are fed not only on the grass of the pasture lands, but also on *khesārī*. This is sown broadcast as a catch crop, as soon as the *aghani* rice crop is cut, and also on the silt left behind by the receding floods. Herds of cows and buffaloes come across from Bhāgalpur and are put to graze on the *khesārī*, which springs up rapidly and has a luxuriant growth. The proprietors of the herds pay high prices for these grazing rights, sometimes, for instance, four to five rupees per acre; but the investment is a good one, for the yield of milk is much improved both in quality and quantity. Curds and *ghi* are prepared on

the spot and sold, the *ghi* being often consigned to Calcutta. The owners of the lands make large profits from the grazing fees, which usually are higher than the annual rents they themselves pay, and in addition to this, the soil is enriched by the manure of the herds.

A veterinary dispensary was opened at Purnea in 1903-04.

CHAPTER VI.

NATURAL CALAMITIES.

LIABILITY TO FAMINE.

PURNEA appears to be less liable to famine than other parts of North Bihār, though it does not escape periods of scarcity. This comparative immunity is due to several causes. In the first place, the crops of the district are not entirely dependent on the rainfall, for the overflow of its rivers supplies ample moisture to the soil. Another safeguard against famine is the fact that the rice crop is by no means the only support of the people, the area under cultivation being distributed between the three crops of the year, viz., *aghani*, *bhadoi* and *rabi*, in the proportion of 56, 34 and 39 per cent. respectively. Though the proportion of the *bhadoi* and *rabi* crops is smaller than that of *aghani*, which is composed mainly of winter rice, the former includes the valuable jute crop and the latter a large crop of oil-seeds, which also brings the cultivators good profits. In the east winter rice predominates, but jute is also very largely grown. In the west wheat, oats and barley are extensively raised, and in the cold season there is a large area under pulses and oil-seeds. The level of the country again is diversified by old river beds and other depressions, which form catchment basins and may be relied on for a good crop even in years of drought. In years of heavy rain the crops of these low lands are damaged, but on the other hand the high lands bear a good crop, so that, whether there be too much rain or too little, some portions of the land bear produce. Finally, a considerable portion of the population do not depend entirely on agriculture, but find cattle breeding and dairy farming a profitable occupation.

The following is a brief account of the famines from which Purnea has suffered.

FAMINE OF 1770.

The great famine of 1770 was attended with frightful mortality in Purnea. As early as the 28th April 1770 the *Faujdār*, Muhammad Alī Khān, reported that multitudes had already perished and continued to perish of hunger. Children were offered for sale, but there were no buyers. Mr. Ducarrel, the English Supervisor, also reported that the miseries in the town

of Purnea were not less shocking than in the rural tracts. Pestilence had to be guarded against by the removal of the dead bodies, upwards of 1,000 being buried in three days after his arrival in the town. He estimated that one-half of the cultivators and payers of revenue would perish with hunger, whilst those able to purchase a subsistence would have to pay at least 500 per cent. advance in the price of food. "On the high and sandy soils," he added, "more than half the ryots are dead." That this was not an exaggerated account is apparent from the report of the President and Council submitted to the Directors of the East India Company on 9th May 1770, in which they said:— "The famine, the mortality, the beggary, exceed all description. Above one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the once plentiful province of Purneah."

A week later the Minister of State, Muhammad Reza Khān, gave a vivid account of the condition of the country. "How," he wrote, "shall I describe the misery of the country from the excessive droughts, the dearness and scarcity of grain hitherto, but now a total failure? The tanks and springs are dried up, and water grows daily more difficult to be procured. Added to these calamities, frequent and dreadful fires have happened throughout the country, impoverished whole families, and destroyed thousands of lives. The small stores of grain which yet remained at Raje Gunge, Dewan Gunge, and other places within the districts of Dinagepore and Poorneah, have been consumed by fire. Before each day furnished accounts of the fate of thousands; but notwithstanding, some hopes were still left that during the months of April and May we should be blessed with rain, and the poor ryotts able to till their ground; but to this hour not a drop has fallen." In spite of this, he reported on the 2nd June that he had, by exerting his utmost abilities, collected the revenue of 1770, "as closely as so dreadful a season would admit. The remainder cannot be collected without evident ruin to the ryots, desolation to the country, and a heavy loss in the ensuing year."

The state of affairs by the end of the year can be gathered from Mr. Ducarrel's account (dated 13th December 1770) of four *parganas* which he had personally visited. "There having been little or no harvest, the people either perished or went elsewhere for subsistence, and they (*i.e.*, the lands) were really sunk in one year almost half their value, on which point I should not have been satisfied if I had not received every proof that the closest examination could give me. They are now really lying waste for want of inhabitants, particularly Hyvelee Poorneah,

which contained more than 1,000 villages; and it is the deficiency which takes place here that renders the Poorneah revenue less this year than heretofore." Further on, he said:—"The Gunge, called Alumgunge, the principal receipts of which depended on the consumption of grain in the town, has declined greatly by reason of the considerable decrease of inhabitants during the last famine, a great part of the town having become a jungle and literally a refuge for wild beasts. In respect to the improvement of the country, I must, in answer, premise that, according to the attested accounts I have received from the Pergunahs, there have perished near two lacks (*i.e.*, 200,000) of people in this district." To this it may be added that on the 20th December 1770 a letter from Mr. Reed of Murshidābād states that "in Dacca, Poorneah and Hooghly, collections are regularly kept up, and some of them paid in advance!"* It is a somewhat striking commentary on this, and also a sign of how long the effects of the famine lasted, that as late as 1788 it was reported that the lands in about one-fourth of the whole Dharampur *pargana* had been depopulated during the famine and that most of them continued out of cultivation down to that year. On the other hand, in 1772 there was such an abundant rice crop that it was unsaleable and the revenue was far less than in 1770.

SUBSEQUENT PERIODS OF SCARCITY.

Some periods of scarcity ensued at the close of the 18th century. On 23rd September 1783 Mr. W. Douglas, the Acting Chief of Purnea, reported :—"The uncommon drought which has been experienced this season in most of the *parganas* in this district has occasioned almost a total failure of the rice crops; that article has consequently become remarkably dear. The common sort, which sold last year for 4 maunds the rupee, now sells from 1 maund to 1 maund 10 seers for the rupee. So great an increase in the price has thrown the poorer class of the inhabitants (whose sole dependence for subsistence is on that grain) into the utmost consternation. Many of them recollect with horror the melancholy effects of the dearth of 1769-70 and are fearful of experiencing like calamity this year. They have pointed to me in the strongest colours their apprehensions, and represented the uncommon distress they now labour under and the apparent probability of their suffering still greater hardships, unless some speedy and effectual steps are taken to prevent the exportation of rice out of this district. Finding upon particular inquiry that vast numbers of merchants resorted here from different parts of the country for the express purpose of purchasing rice, I have

* *Annals of Rural Bengal*, pp. 24, 405, 407, 410, 411, 417.

therefore thought it highly necessary, as well for the present ease and relief of the poor as to avert the dreadful effects of a scarcity, to issue an order to the farmer prohibiting any further exportation of that article, suffering, however, such merchants to convey away whatever quantity they may have already loaded on their boats."

A further report on the state of affairs on 28th October 1783 submitted by Mr. S. Heatly, the Chief of Purnea, throws light on the resources of Purnea as a great rice-producing area. "The districts of Raje Mahal, Boglepore, and Mongheer," he wrote, "draw their supplies immediately from Purnea and must at this alarming crisis look up to it for their subsistence; and I do conceive, if the exportation is extended no further, that Purnea might hold up her head and give support to the adjacent districts, but when the army contractors and others of all denominations are suffered to carry whatever quantity of grain out of the district they deem proper, I confess, gentlemen, I am alarmed for the situation of the poor inhabitants and expect they will be suddenly in danger of experiencing the melancholy scene of 1769."

There was again deficient rainfall in 1788; and in 1791 the rains set in a month earlier than usual and failed prematurely. The result was that there were floods in May and a continued drought after the 15th August, but the failure was estimated at not more than one-fourth of the usual annual produce. It is noticeable, moreover, that the officials more frequently dreaded the effects of an excessive than of a deficient harvest. Thus, in 1786, it is stated that the revenue of *pargana* Badaur had fallen from Rs. 1,50,000 a year to Rs 75,818 'solely from the too great abundance of rice;' and that, in the district generally, much land had fallen out of cultivation in consequence of the excessive production of previous years, and of the immense stores of rice in the country rendering grain crops so valueless as not to suffice to pay the rents of the lands producing them.

Famine of 1866. There is no mention of any failure, greater than ordinary short crops, till 1865. There was then a certain deficiency in the local produce, but nothing amounting to a general failure of the crops; and the scarcity of the following year was ascribed to a sudden and excessive increase in the price of all articles of food. The grain stock of the district had been reduced by the excessive drain upon it for provision of the troops, which were constantly passing to and fro in consequence of the war with Bhutān during the two previous years. General exportation had, moreover, so far diminished supplies, that in October 1865 the coarsest kind of rice was selling at 12 seers for the rupee, while the current price for the best rice was 9 seers, as against 22 seers in

1864 and 26 seers in 1863. As the fresh crop came in, an improvement took place, and distress was not again generally felt till the following April, when the price of coarse rice again rose to the above rate. About this time, however, mango fruit, of which there was an extraordinarily large supply, became fit for consumption, and large classes of the people were almost entirely supported on this food for several weeks. Notwithstanding the unusual demand, it was so abundant that for a long time a hundred continued to be sold for a single pice.

It appears that the *bhadoi* crop was in most parts of the district an unusually good one. The winter rice in the south was a little below the average, but in Kishanganj an eighth of the crop perished by drought, and in the extreme east, beyond the Mahānandā, people were forced to live on *kachu* and other edible roots. In Dharampur the *aghani* crop, though sown very late in the year, turned out well, but the *bhadoi* was a failure. Here, however, the people had wheat and plenty of pulses to live on. No relief seems to have been required; and only Rs. 170 were spent on some petty road work in the town of Purnea. No deaths occurred, and very little severe distress was reported.

The rainfall in 1873 was deficient in quantity, and also unfavourably distributed. Only half the usual quantity fell in June, when, as a rule, abundant moisture softens the ground for ploughing, and, though the fall in July was up to the average, it fell under it by 4 inches or 30 per cent. in August. In September the rain ceased with a fall of 65 per cent. less than the average in that month. The effect of this deficient and unseasonable rainfall on the *bhadoi* or autumn crop was to reduce it to one-half the average. The effect on the winter rice crop was even more disastrous, for it yielded only three-sixteenths or at the most one-fourth of the average. The failure of the latter crop was severest in the east of the district, in the lands usually flooded by the Mahānadī and Panār rivers. In the Amur Kasbā and Kadwā thānas and in parts of the Purnea and Balarāmpur thānas—an area of about 1,200 square miles—not more than one-sixteenth of an average rice crop was harvested. In the Kishanganj thāna and parts of the Purnea, Katihār and Gondwārā thānas also, covering an area of about 1,200 square miles, only a fourth of the crop was saved. In the four northern thānas the yield was three-eighths of the average, and along the Kosi the crop was good. FAMINE OF 1874.

This diminution in the ordinary food-supply immediately influenced the markets, in which, by January 1874, the prices of all sorts of grain were double the normal rates. The general level of prices thereafter was scarcely affected either by the

harvesting of the *rabi* crop, which had a fair outturn, or by private importations of food-grains, which seem never to have ceased; and tension continued with slight variations, now towards an easier, now towards a more rigid tone, until the *bhadoi* or autumn harvests restored confidence. Relief works were started in December 1873 and continued till the end of September 1874, the highest daily average attendance being in May, when it was 31,029 persons. Altogether, 3,828,420 persons were employed on relief works from first to last. Gratuitous relief was started at the end of February and continued till the 24th September, the highest number of persons relieved in this way being 36,180 in July.

SCARCITY OF 1892.

In 1892 relief operations had to be undertaken in the Kadwā and Amur thānas, the area affected being 265 square miles in the former and 285 square miles in the latter thāna. Here distress was due to the failure of the winter rice of 1891 and of the *rabi* in 1891-92, and was aggravated by the fact that the stock of food-grains had been much reduced by heavy sales in 1891. On account of high floods the year before, more *aghani* was sown than usual, but the rainfall was markedly deficient. A succession of droughts occurred from June to October, the rainfall in the Purnea subdivision being only 32·94 inches; and from November till the third week in March no rain fell. The result was a failure of the *aghani* rice, the outturn being only 2 annas, while the *rabi* crops yielded not more than 5 to 6 annas. From the end of January 1892 to the end of March there was little work for labourers, and a number of fires broke out, which were ascribed to the *banihārs* (labourers) setting the houses of the villagers on fire, in order that labour might be required to rebuild them. Relief works were started on the 27th of January 1892 and closed on the 28th May. The attendance was largest in March and the first half of April, when about 3,200 persons found employment on the works. The distribution of gratuitous relief was commenced on the 30th January and was continued till the 17th June, the highest number of persons so relieved being 1,360 in the week ending the 9th April. Advances to the extent of Rs. 22,551 were also given to cultivators under the Agriculturists' Loans Act, and Rs. 140 were granted under the Land Improvement Act. This form of relief was not confined to the Kadwā and Amur thānas, but was extended to parts of the Purnea and Korhā thānas and to the Khās Mahāl of Belwā Harinkhuri in the Katihār thāna.

SCARCITY OF 1897.

In 1897, when other parts of India suffered from the most terrible famine of the century, Purnea was scarcely affected, though rainfall was short and crops were deficient, the outturn of

aghani being 8⅓ annas, of *bhadoi* 9 annas, and of *rabi* food-crops 12¾ annas - taking 16 annas as an average outturn. No relief works had to be started, but some gratuitous relief was given. It was found that the subscriptions locally collected, supplemented by a grant of Rs. 2,000 from the Indian Famine Charitable Relief Fund, gave all the relief required. To show how little the district was affected, it may be mentioned that when the Collector, having received reports that in certain places coolies were starving for want of work, offered them work, the men stood out for 3½ annas a day, as they could get congenial work in the fields at fair wages besides an allowance of food.

SCARCITY OF 1906. There was some scarcity in 1906 due to high and long continued floods. Relief works were opened tentatively in the areas most affected, but not a single man could be found willing to accept work at famine rates. The demand for labour was great in other parts of the district, and the average earnings were far higher than famine rates, even for unskilled labourers. About Rs. 22,000 were distributed in the form of agricultural loans, and gratuitous relief was also given from the Arāriā Cholera Fund (raised in the previous year), from the Rām Lāl Mukherji Fund, an allotment being made by Government from it, and from a fund raised in Purnea for the purpose.

FLOODS. Purnea is very liable to floods caused by the overflow of the Ganges and its tributaries. Not all the floods, however, are injurious, for in years of flood it is common for the high lands to yield well, and a good *rabi* crop often makes up for the loss of rice destroyed by inundation. The Mahānandā, moreover, deposits a rich alluvial silt, on which fertile crops are raised after the subsidence of the waters. The case is different with the Kosi, which spreads a layer of infertile sand over the land. The most serious inundation of recent years was that of 1906, when both the Kosi and Ganges were in high flood at the same time, and the Mahanandā also rose high.

Floods of the Kosi. The river Kosi is especially notorious for the extent of its floods. This river has a catchment area of about 23,992 square miles and, in this respect, it is the third largest of the Himâlayan rivers, ranking second only to the Indus and Brahmaputra. It debouches from the hills at a point only 100 miles north of its junction with the Ganges, and during this portion of its course the enormous volume of water poured in from Nepāl has to be carried off by its bed or rather beds, for it has many channels. The latter are not sufficiently wide for the purpose, and the fall is comparatively slight. The result is that in time of flood the river spills far and wide submerging a large area in the

Rāniganj and Damdahā thānas for two or three months each year. In the extreme south it has to provide an outlet not only for the water brought down from Nepāl and Purnea, but also for the drainage of North Bhāgalpur and North Monghyr. The waters of the Tiljūgā and Bāghmati from North Bhāgalpur join the Gogrī, which flows south-east from North Monghyr; and all three rivers join the Kosi a short distance above the Kosi bridge on the Bengal and North-Western Railway, between Kurselā and Katareā stations. The outlet is too narrow for the combined rivers, and in the rains the surrounding country is inundated. Within recent times the denudation of the forest area to the north is said to have increased the intensity of the floods in Purnea. Thirty years ago the country between Patthardewā on the frontier and the jungle belt was well wooded. It is now a bare cultivated plain, which offers no resistance to the passage of floods.

EMBANKMENTS.

On the west in the Bhāgalpur district there is a long embankment known as the Bīr Bāndh, which appears to have been constructed some centuries ago as a protection work, though its actual purpose is disputed. In the north of this district there are some small protective embankments, with a total length of 1½ miles, erected by the District Board in 1889-90 to prevent the eastward trend of Kosi in its upper reaches towards Anchrā Ghāt. Further south, on the east bank of the Damdahā Kosi, there is a private embankment, called the Sirsi Bāndh, erected by the Sirsi factory and the Gondwārā concern to protect the land under indigo cultivation. Large training works of a modern type have also been erected by the Bengal and North-Western Railway at the point where the Kosi enters the Ganges.

On the Kosi.

The question of building extensive embankments to control the river and prevent its swinging back to the east was considered some years ago. The local authorities, the planters, and the railway officials, severally and in combination, carried out surveys and examined plans, and the river was explored up to where its channel is defined and unalterable in Nepāl. A scheme was proposed for controlling it, and the whole subject was considered in 1896-97 at a conference in Calcutta, presided over by the Secretary to the Government of India in the Public Works Department. The result was that the scheme proposed was pronounced to be of doubtful efficacy, while its cost was enormous. It was concluded that no steps are feasible for controlling the course of this tremendous river with its numerous channels and their wide and elevated beds, beyond protecting by short lengths of embankments isolated tracts exposed to its floods.

The most important embankment in the district is that of the Bengal and North-Western Railway, which runs along the south of the district parallel to the Ganges from Kursela to Katihār, and thence through Bhagālpur and Monghyr. It forms an effective barrier against the Ganges floods, but on the other hand doubts have been raised as to the sufficiency of the waterway provided, and as to whether high floods from the north are thereby prevented from getting away to the Ganges as rapidly as they might otherwise do. It is true that much of the land adjoining it is uncultivated, but fears are expressed that there is danger of lands going out of cultivation owing to permanent water-logging, and of lands at present cultivable but uncultivated being rendered entirely unfit for cultivation. On this point Captain F. C. Hirst remarks :—" I believe that this embankment contains, from Mansi to Katihār, a direct distance of about 60 miles, an average waterway per mile of about 75 feet. If we cut out the waterway allowed for important streams (Chota Kosi, Boro, Barandi and Kosi)—and these can be eliminated, since they are not exits for Ganges water spilling to the north—we find that only just over 3 feet of waterway per mile remain for carrying Ganges spill through the embankment. In other words, the Ganges is not building at all north of the embankment."* **The railway embankment.**

The only embankments in the district maintained by Government are the Belwā embankments, built at Belwā 2 miles south of Basantpur (the headquarters of the Arāriā subdivision) to restrain the river Panār from encroaching westwards. They protect an area of 14,162 acres, and are composed of the following works, with an aggregate length of 14,574 feet or 3 miles 365 feet :—(1) an embankment (3,135 feet) along the Panār ; (2) a retired embankment (5,225 feet) ; (3) an embankment (1,431 feet) joining these two embankments ; (4) an embankment (1,640 feet) across the Panār Dhar near Mirzābāgh ; (5) a retired embankment (1,018 feet) at Belwā ; and (6) a road (2,125 feet) leading to the embankments. There are also four short spur embankments, with an aggregate length of 1,631 feet, along the new channel of the river Panār near the civil station of Arāriā, which were designed to protect it from the encroachment of that river. These embankments are maintained by the Public Works Department, which incurs all expenditure in the first instance. The cost of maintenance is then apportioned among the zamīndārs whose estates are benefited and is recovered from them. **Belwa embankments.**

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* F. C. Hirst, *The Kosi River*, J. A. S. B., September 1908.

Other embankments. There is a small embankment close to Purnea town, which was erected to protect it from inundation, and there are also some zamīndāri *bāndhs* near Arāriā. Another old embankment, called the Māmu Bhagina Ail, enters the district from Nekmard in Dinājpur, and runs across country near the south of the *pargana* Sūrjyapur in the Kishanganj subdivision. It was probably originally a line of earthworks intended as a defence against the hill tribes, and not an embankment to protect the country from inundation.

CHAPTER VII.

RENTS, WAGES AND PRICES.

THE settlement proceedings recently concluded show that the average incidence of the rent paid by ryots as distinct from under-ryots is Rs. 1-13-3 per acre. This figure would be higher, were it not that ryots at fixed rates hold 115,205 acres or 5 per cent. of the occupied area, and that their rents are low, averaging Re. 1-0-4 per acre. The highest rental is paid in thānas Islāmpur and Bahādurganj, where land is especially valuable, most of it being capable of bearing crops both of rice and jute in the same year. The average rental is far less than in any other district of North Bihār except Champāran, and there seems to be no doubt that the ryots paying cash rents in this district are in much better circumstances than their fellow cultivators elsewhere. There is one peculiar form of rental for what are called *bhadiān* lands, *i.e.*, uplands which bear a *bhadoi* rice crop once in 3 or 4 years. For such lands the tenant pays rent only when he actually cultivates them. The only rents which are really high are those of under-ryots, with or without rights of occupancy, but very many of them are petty tenants holding only house sites and homestead lands, for which there is naturally much competition in areas liable to inundation. In their cases alone can the rents be styled competitive.

RENTS. Cash rents.

On the general incidence of rental Mr. Byrne remarks as follows in the Purnea Settlement Report—"It may be confidently stated that rents in Purnea have not been forced up to an unendurable limit, and illegal enhancements were neither so widespread nor so oppressive as they were in each and every one of the districts previously dealt with, with the possible exception of Champāran. In it, at present, the incidence of ryoti rental is Rs. 1-14-7 per acre and that of the land revenue demand is only 3·7 annas per acre, *i.e.*, as eight to one. In Purnea the ryoti incidence is Rs. 1-13-3 per acre and that of the land revenue demand for the permanently-settled area is 6 annas, *i.e.*, as five to one. It would thus appear that the proprietors in Purnea make less profit than in Champāran. These figures do not

include any estimate for the area held on produce rent and for the rent-free area."

The following table gives statistics of the cash rents paid by different classes of ryots as ascertained in the course of the recent settlement :—

Class of tenant.	Rent-paying area.	Area held on produce rents.	Incidence of cash rent per acre.
	Acres.	Acres.	Rs. A. P.
Ryots at fixed rates ...	115,205	...	1 0 4
Settled and occupancy ryots ..	1,549,605	92,746	1 14 7
Non-occupancy ryots	72,546	6,830	1 8 8
Occupancy under-ryots	61,544	17,253	4 5 7
Non-occupancy under-ryots ...	45,689	17,846	3 10 2

Produce rents. The proportion of land held on produce rents is comparatively small, being 6 per cent., 9 per cent. and 32 per cent. in the case of settled and occupancy ryots, non-occupancy ryots, and under-ryots, respectively. The proportion in the case of under-ryots seems *primâ facie* high, but is less than in other districts of North Bihār except Sāran, and the total area so held is only 35,099 acres. The most common form of produce rents is that known as *ādhiā* (half), in which the cultivator keeps one-half and the landlord the other half of the crop after it has been harvested. For some lands rents are paid partly in cash and partly in kind under the system called *thīkā ādhi*, *i.e.*, a small cash rent (about half the average rate) is fixed on for the plot, and, in addition to this, one-fourth of the produce is taken. This system, when honestly worked, is said to be an extremely fair method of assessing a rent on lands of doubtful fertility.

WAGES. The earliest record of the value of labour in Purnea appears to be contained in a letter of the Collector to the Board of Revenue dated the 16th April 1788, in which he estimated the average earnings of the labouring classes at one rupee a month. The statistical survey made by Dr. Buchanan Hamilton about 1810 gives more detailed information regarding the wages of labour. The lowest class of farm labourers received 8 annas a month, and an eighth of a seer of cleaned rice a day. Such a labourer, however, was paid specially during harvest time, at the rate of 5½ seers of unhusked rice, or 12 maunds for three months; or, for the whole year, Rs. 4-8 in money and 14 maunds of unhusked or 9 maunds of husked rice, which would give him one seer a day for food. The rate for cowherds was much the same. They received two annas a month in money and ½ seer of rice daily for every six head of cattle tended. It was considered a full day's work for a man to tend 24

oxen, so that his monthly wages were 8 annas and ½ seer of rice daily. Ploughmen were usually remunerated by being permitted to use the farmer's plough and cattle on their little plots of land during 8 days in the month.

The class of labourers who seem to have been best off were those who worked from day to day for hire. Their ordinary daily wages were three *pan* of cowries, *i.e.*, 9 pies a day in money, or three seers weight of unhusked rice. On the supposition that he could obtain labour only during nine months of the year, a man of this class would still receive 20 maunds of grain, which would be much more than sufficient for his support. Female coolies were almost as well paid; but they, as well as the men, seem to have been very improvident, and were usually so much in debt as to have to work on advances. A curious form of wages (which has now died out) was usual in the case of Musalmān cooks. They received eight annas for every maund of 82 lbs. weight of rice boiled by them. In Purnea town domestic servants received from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 a month and had to find themselves in food, clothing and lodging; while the general wages given to good servants were one rupee a month in addition to food and clothing.

The rise in the rate of wages which has subsequently taken place will be apparent from the following table showing the daily wages paid to various classes of labour in the last 15 years:—

	1895.	1900.	1905.	1909.
	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.	Rs. A. P.
Masons	0 5 0 to 1 0 0	0 5 3 to 1 0 0	0 6 0 to 0 8 0	0 8 0 to 1 0 0
Carpenters... ...	0 6 0 to 1 0 0	0 4 0 to 1 0 0	0 8 0 to 0 12 0	0 6 0 to 0 12 0
Blacksmiths ...	0 4 0 to 0 8 0	0 4 0 to 0 8 0	0 6 0 to 0 8 0	0 14 0 to 1 0 0
Male coolies ...	0 2 6 to 0 3 0	0 2 0 to 0 3 0	0 3 0 to 0 4 0	0 3 6 to 0 4 0
Female coolies ...	0 1 6 to 0 2 0	0 1 6 to 0 2 6	0 2 0 to 0 2 6	0 2 6 to 0 3 0

It must be remembered that in this district wages are still very largely paid in kind. The village carpenter receives 15 to 20 seers of grain for each plough at harvest time, and in consideration of this allowance, he keeps agricultural implements

in repair. The barber and washerman draw 5 to 10 seers of grain annually for each family they serve, according to its size; while the cobbler has a presumptive right to the skins of animals which die within the village confines. Agricultural labourers are also generally paid in kind. Every reaper is expected to cut in a day two bundles (*bojhā*) and six *mutīs* of rice; each bundle consists of 20 *mutīs*, *i.e.*, literally handfuls, but the *mutī* is a conventional measure, considerably exceeding what can be held in the closed hand: in fact the measure varies according to local usage. In some parts too there is a measure called a *pānjā*, intermediate between the *mutī* and *bojhā*, and the scale is:—5 *mutīs* make a *pānjā* and 6 *pānjās* form a *bojhā*, so that a *bojhā* is equal to 30 *mutīs*. Of the 46 *mutīs* received from the reaper, the farmer keeps forty-two and gives his labourer four; these *mutīs* contain about 2½ seers of rough rice. The rate for threshing, when performed by men, is one seer out of eight seers thrashed.

After the rice has been threshed, it is cleaned by women, who are also paid in kind. The owner gives 70 seers of rice in the husk, and receives back 40 seers of clean grain, when the operation is performed without previous boiling. Under the *ushnā* system the women get 65 seers of rough rice and return 40 seers of clean rice. It takes two women two days to produce 40 seers of clean rice, according to either method; and they are remunerated, in the case of *ushnā*, with 4½ seers of clean rice and a half seer of broken rice, or *khud chāul*; in the case of *ārwā*, with 5 seers of clean rice and 1¼ seers of broken rice. Each woman, therefore, earns 1¼ seers of *ushnā*, or 1½ seers of *ārwā* rice, daily. In the rice market at Kasbā, near Purnea, the grain dealers get 36¼ seers of clean rice out of every 70 seers of rough rice, after paying 3¾ seers of clean rice to the women for their labour. In the case of *ārwā* rice the dealers get 50 seers net of clean rice from 2 maunds of rough rice, and the women receive 5 seers of the former for their labour.

Kamiyās. One class of labourers calls for special mention, viz., the *kamiyās*, who do not receive a daily wage, but are, by custom, bound to serve their employer on nominal wages, *e. g.* of Rs. 6 per annum. These men are well fed and suffer but little in times of scarcity. They get a large proportion of grain during the harvest months, their earnings having a money value of Rs. 5 as compared with Rs. 3 earned by a free hand. Most families too have cows and rights of pasturage, and pigs are kept by nearly all. A patch of garden land keeps them in coarse vegetables, and during the winter season they get occasional jobs as palanquin bearers.

There is little information regarding prices in the early records of Purnea. Regular fortnightly returns appear to have been submitted to Government, but the original office copies have been destroyed. In 1794, however, the Collector reported, in connection with the purchase of some grain for Government storage, that "in Purnea district, there are only two rice harvests in the course of the year, namely *bhadoi* and *aghani*. The former is not above half as productive as the latter ; the grain yielded therefrom is of a very inferior quality, and held in no estimation by the natives, but for the support of the very lowest and poorest classes of the inhabitants and feeding cattle. The *aghani* crop is quite the reverse, bears a higher price, and is sought after and purchased by all descriptions of merchants, as well for its superior quality as the length of time it will keep good; whereas the *bhadoi* grain begins to decay, it is said, after one year's keeping. The *bhadoi* rice, when cleaned, sells at 2 maunds 10 seers per rupee ; unshelled *bhadoi dhān* or rice, at 4½ maunds per rupee ; *aghani* rice, cleaned, at 2 maunds per rupee ; unshelled *aghani* rice, 4 maunds per rupee; *ārwā*, or fine rice, one rupee per maund." He adds: "Wheat is another commodity, the produce of this district, that is greatly sought after by all classes of people, and is generally very cheap and moderate. The price is generally from 2 to 2 maunds 10 seers per rupee." PRICES.

The rise in the price of food since that date may be realized from the following table showing the average prices (in seers and chittacks per rupee) for the principal food-grains and for salt during the last 3 years:—

	Common rice.		Wheat.		Gram.		Maize.		Salt.	
	Srs.	chs.	Srs.	chs.	Srs.	chs.	Srs.	chs.	Srs.	chs.
1905-06 ...	10	14	12	7	13	12	20	15	12	14
1906-07 .	7	6	10	1	10	7	11	4	13	9
1907-08 ...	8	0	8	10	9	12	10	8	15	2

The general rise of prices in recent years is not peculiar to Purnea, but has been general throughout the province and is due to other than local circumstances. There is, it will be noticed, one exception, viz., the fall in the price of salt, which is attributed to the reduction of the duty on that commodity.

It is of some interest to consider the account of economic conditions given by Buchanan Hamilton 100 years ago and to compare it with the present state of things. "Even a rupee," he wrote, "in this country is a large sum, being a ploughman's MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

money wages for 2 months. In most parts of the district the currency consists entirely of silver and cowries. Towards the western parts a few of the copper coins called 'payesa,' worth about one-sixteenth of a rupee, are current, but even these are too large for the small money of a country, where two of them are equal to the comfortable daily board wages of a man-servant." Slavery was common, a grown man being sold at Rs. 15 to Rs. 20, a lad of 16 years of age at Rs. 12 to Rs. 20, while a girl of 8 or 10 years of age sold for 5 to Rs. 15. "In a few divisions towards Dinâjpur, the poorest people eat little or no salt and supply its place by ashes; and in few others, towards the north-east, the lowest classes add some ashes to compensate the scantiness of the supply." The beggars of the country had a miserable lot and died like dogs. "The Dārogāh or Superintendent of Police is indeed considered bound to remove dead bodies: but in many places there are no persons of a caste that can perform the office, and many parts are too far removed from the officer of police. When a wretch, therefore, is about to expire he is usually carried out to the road, and allowed to die; or, if he is suddenly carried off, his death is carefully concealed until night, when the corpse is privately thrown out to the dogs. It seems to be this difficulty of managing the dead, more than a want of charity, that imposes a vast deal of distress on the necessitous poor of this district."

The houses of the people were of the flimsiest description, especially in the west, where they were small huts, excluding neither sun, wind, nor rain. In thāna Damdahā there was not a single dwelling-house of brick and only one brick-built shop. The Saifganj *pargana* had "some tolerable houses with wooden frames, the walls consisting of straw placed between two rows of reeds, and plastered on both sides with clay and cowdung. These have wooden doors, but no windows, as they are considered too favourable for wanton curiosity." Again, he remarked:—"The natives of most parts of the district would consider the proposal of any person, under the decree of a Rājā, to build a house of brick as little short of insanity. It is owing to the laudable exertions of Mr. Smith that a great part of the brick houses in the town of Purnea have been erected. Houses consisting of a wooden and bamboo frame, and covered with tiles, are confined to the capital."

A word of caution, however, is necessary against drawing inferences of extreme poverty from the character of the houses, for much of the soil is so sandy that solid mud walls can scarcely be built, while in many parts they would be most unsuitable, owing to the country being liable to inundation. A modern Bengali

writer, indeed, describes the houses of the peasant in much the same way as Buchanan Hamilton :—"In Purneah we hardly see a house with thick mud walls; the sandy soil is utterly unfit for the purpose. The houses of the poor are made of bamboo framework, thinly plastered over with mud, and thatched with straw. The peasantry live in these. A village in Purneah looks at a distance like a collection of bird-cages. The poorest of the poor live in huts made of reeds, which hardly support the thatch. These structures have one peculiar advantage; they are portable. A man, like a snail, can carry his house anywhere and raise it there anew. The middle-class men, including among others small farmers, grocers, rice-merchants, carpenters, cart-owners and law-agents, live in better houses. These are erected on ground above the reach of flood-water, and constructed chiefly of the same materials, though of a superior quality. They are dry, spacious, and comfortable; the doors and windows are made of wood instead of bamboo. Brick-built houses are very rare; even the rich content themselves with good-sized bungalows built in the middle of out-houses made of bamboo and straw. These latter are for servants, carts and domestic animals, holes in the wall serving the purposes of doors and windows."*

Special enquiries regarding the condition of the people were made in 1888, the results of which were summarized by the Collector as follows:—"(1) Indigenous beggars outside the towns and business centres are unknown. They are to be found in Purnea town, and doubtless in Kishanganj, Kasbā and Saifganj, and possibly in one or two other trade centres. The power and inclination to give may account for their existence at such places. Outside the above places the only beggars met with are wandering vagabonds, chiefly from the west. (2) When it is necessary to obtain unskilled labour for the roads or for railway operations, such labour has to be imported from the west. This I know from my connection with the district roads and my observations on the railway work. I have enquired of contractors the reason for this, and the answer has always been that the local men have their land, and they do not care to take up work on the line. The people of Purnea are for the most part wanting in effort or desire to improve themselves. They have learnt to be content with such things as they have; they will not even, when in want, accept good wages if it involves their leaving their homes and working a little more than they are accustomed to; hence their unwillingness to take work on the line, or to enter domestic

* Purnea as it is, Rural Sketches, 1888.

service, or to emigrate to Darjeeling. This is commonly attributed to their prosperity: I fear this is not always the case. I think that the debility produced by the deadly climate of the place assists to make the people indolent and spiritless. I have noticed a mental paralysis among the European and Eurasian residents, which I attribute to the same cause. European officers feel the tendency and overcome it for a season, but I am inclined to think that in the long run they succumb to it. The early stages of the disorder are indolence and listlessness, which first manifest themselves during periods of malarious fevers only, but undoubtedly become chronic in time.

"(3) A third fact refers to emigration. Though the Chota-Nāgpur or Dhāngar coolies pass through the district in hundreds every year, voluntarily going to Darjeeling in search of employment, no Purnea cooly was ever known to do so. Some of these same Dhāngars have settled in the south and west of the district, and either find the place a land of Goshen, as it is the practice to describe the district, or become fever-stricken and indolent like the rest. (4) It is a fact that the people of Purnea are not litigious. They are mild, docile and long-suffering. To what is this fact to be attributed? I think, first, to their easy rates of rent, which do not provoke litigation; and secondly, to the indolence aforesaid. (5) The rents here are low, sometimes nominal and always light in relation to the capabilities of the land. (6) I never saw a worse housed population, though I have camped in many districts; this I attribute to constitutional indolence. All the above facts apply to cultivators, labourers and village craftsmen. They indicate that, if the condition of the people is not better, it is not due to their wanting opportunity, but rather to their wanting inclination to improvement. The above facts show also that nothing can be charged to rack-renting, which does not exist in the district owing to the vast area of cultivable soil that is still available for settlement."

As regards the labouring and industrial classes the Collector wrote:- "It appears that, taking the year round, the labourers can make both ends meet, and even become possessed of cattle, swine and carts, which must be the outcome of thrift. There are two periods of slack work—the first about June, and perhaps to some extent before that; the second in October. Against this must be set off the fact that about ten months of the year admit of savings, which enable the labourer to tide over the slack periods. Finally, as to handicrafts, artisans in towns are extremely well off and independent, and form so very small an unit of the population that I think it unnecessary to go into

their case. In the country the village *barhi* or carpenter receives an allowance of 15 to 20 seers per plough at each harvest, of which there are generally two in this district; for this he keeps the plough in repair. He also makes ploughs, boats, chests and other rough carpentry. The *nāpit* or barber receives 10 seers of the crop at each harvest from each homestead, besides presents at *srāddhas* and marriages, and sundry other emoluments for offices performed by him according to custom. He may also hold lands. The *dhobi* or washerman receives 5 to 10 seers, according to the size of the family, from each household at each harvest. The *chamār* or cobbler has a right to the skins of all cattle dying in the village. These he sells, and he does a little rough cobbling if need be. His wife, the *chamārin*, is the hereditary midwife of the village and is paid by presents. The above form all the crafts generally found in a Purnea village. Blacksmith's work is done by carpenters. There is no want, so far as I can learn, in any of these classes. They are necessities to the village, and the villagers arrange that they shall live in reasonable comfort. Weavers are not a conspicuous class in this district. They do not, so far as I can learn, exist in the part where my enquiries were made. In the north they do exist and find a good sale for their coarse cloths and their coloured cloths for the use of females. Some gunny cloth is also produced by this class. If they do not find work, they take to agriculture: lands are plentiful in this district."

Further enquiries regarding the material condition of the people were made during the recent settlement. The amount needed to keep an average family of 5·4 persons in moderate comfort in a normal year was taken at Rs. 100, and as that sum represents the profits on 4 acres of land, the latter area was taken to be a "subsistence holding." The average area held by ryots was found to be about 10 acres, and the net profit, after deducting rent, cesses, etc., was calculated at Rs. 175 or Rs. 35 a head, which gives a good margin for the supply of other than the necessities of life. "With this margin," remarks Mr. Byrne, in the Settlement Report "it is only natural to expect that the indebtedness of the Purnea cultivator is not very high. The only clue to it is that given by the amounts shown as advanced on mortgages on possession in the returns of transfers of occupancy rights, since the only security ordinarily accepted for loans is a mortgage with possession. The total amount therein recorded is less than Rs. 95,000. The corresponding amount of recorded indebtedness was in Sāran 50 lakhs, in Darbhangā just under 8 lakhs, in North Monghyr

under 4 lakhs, in Muzaffarpur under 5 lakhs, and in Champāran nearly 11 lakhs. Probably these figures give a better idea of the material condition of the peasantry in Purnea, as compared with other districts, than the elaborate empirical calculation of average income. The consideration of average incomes alone is apt to lead to fallacious conclusions. The fact that the average income for the district is Rs. 35 offers but small consolation to a family whose average income per head is only ten rupees. The words of Mr. Stevenson-Moore sum up the whole question admirably:—"The difficulty of forming an accurate estimate as to the material condition of the several classes of an alien, exclusive and suspicious people is considerable; but the difficulty of adducing convincing proof of the accuracy of the estimate is well nigh insuperable."

As regards labourers, who are always the first to feel the pinch of scarcity, this class is not only less numerous but also less helpless in Purnea than in other North Bihār districts. The great demand that exists for labourers and the high wages earned by them, especially in Sūrjyapur *pargana*, where during the paddy reaping season 6 to 8 annas a day are readily obtainable by unskilled labourers, is a surer index to this than statistics. Instances were not unknown during the settlement of men, who held small pieces of land and cultivated with borrowed bullocks on produce rents, utterly refusing to accept *parchas* or *khatiāns* for them, as they said they could live much more comfortably as ordinary labourers earning 4 to 8 annas a day in addition to their food.

CHAPTER VIII.

OCCUPATIONS, MANUFACTURES AND TRADE.

Occupations. The returns of occupations compiled at the census of 1901 show that 1,338,000 persons, or 71·4 per cent. of the population, are supported by agriculture. Of these, 47 per cent. are actual workers, including 477,000 rent-payers, 146,000 agricultural labourers and 2,000 rent-receivers. Altogether, 220,000 persons or 11·8 per cent. are engaged in various industries, and 61 per cent. are actual workers, among them being 16,000 cow and buffalo keepers, 13,000 fishermen and fish-dealers, 12,000 oil-pressers and sellers, 8,000 grocers, 7,000 rice pounders, 7,000 cotton weavers, 5,000 basket and mat-makers, 4,000 potters and 4,000 carpenters. Only 9,000 persons, or 0·5 per cent., are supported by commerce, and 11,000 persons or 0·6 per cent. by the various professions. Among the workers engaged in other occupations are 93,000 general labourers and 33,000 herdsmen, the number of the latter being only surpassed in one other district of Bengal.

Manufactures. The manufactures of Purnea are comparatively few in number and of little commercial importance. During the course of the last century, moreover, several small industries have died out, such as tent-making, which flourished in the town of Purnea under the Muhammadan *Faujdārs*, and paper-making, which was formerly carried on in Kishanganj by a class of Muhammadans called Kāghaziās. The most important industry at the present day is the manufacture of indigo, of which an account will be found in the next chapter. The following is a brief description of the other industries and handicrafts.

***Bidri* ware.** The preparation and inlaying of *bidri* ware is the most interesting of the arts of Purnea, both on account of the intrinsic merit of the articles produced and the dexterity of the artisans. The name *bidri*, it may be explained, is given to the ware, because the industry was introduced from Bidar in the Deccan. The following description of the processes of manufacture is quoted from *A Note on the Bidri ware of Purnea* by Mr. R. J. Hirst, published in the Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for July 1907.

Other accounts will be found in Watt's Indian Arts at Delhi (pp. 46-47) and in Birdwood's Industrial Arts of India (p. 146).

"In Purnea the word *bider* is applied to the amalgum of zinc (*dastā*), and copper (*tāmba*), which is employed in the manufacture of this ware. Tin, which, according to Dr. Birdwood, forms one of the ingredients, is no longer used. The metals are melted, mixed, cast into the required shape, and finally turned on a very primitive lathe, by men of the Kanseri caste. There are only three Kanseris in the whole district now employed in this work, two of whom live at Belauri, a village about two miles south of Purnea railway station, and the other at Katihār. The cast most commonly takes the form of hookah-stands, but *surāhis, sarposhes,** etc., are made to order.

"The manufactured *bider* is sold to the damascene workers of Purnea town and Kasbā at the rate of Re. 1-4 per seer. The metal is then slightly darkened with sulphate of copper (*tutia*), and the design traced with an instrument resembling a sharpened nail. Rough compasses are also used. Mistakes in the designs can be readily effaced with water and a second application of the sulphate of copper: but such mistakes are rare, and Mohan Sonār, who is the principal designer, works very quickly and unerringly. There are two other designers, but they confine themselves to certain unvarying patterns. The edges of the leaves, petals, etc., which form the design, are then sharply defined with a small chisel. Silver leaf is cut up into small pieces, which are roughly shaped to fit the details of the design, and then fixed in position, the instruments employed being a hammer and a blunted nail, which is used as a punch. The silver leaves break off when they come in contact with the edges left by a chisel, and leaves the details of the pattern well defined. Very little subsequent trimming is necessary. The leaf is now firmly embedded in, and appears to form part of the *bider*. No adhesive of any kind is employed. This appears to be a comparatively simple operation, the skilled touch manifesting itself in the engraving with the chisel rather than in the actual inlaying. The number of artisans employed in the engraving and inlaying processes, including the three designers mentioned above, who also perform the operations subsequent in designing, is seven.

"The article is next smoothed and polished on a wheel (*charkā*). The ground-work is then darkened with a paste formed of saltpetre, nitre, borax and sal-ammoniac, which produces a rich and permanent black. When the blackening process is finished, the

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* A *surāhi* is a water vessel, and a *sarposh* the semi-circular cover of a *chilam*.

whole is cleaned and given a final polish with mustard or rape-seed oil. The price of the finished article varies with the thickness of the silver leaf employed. In the cheapest kind of work, the roughness of the *bidar* can be seen through the inlaid leaf, and the definition is not so sharp as in the higher grades, in which the silver presents a very smooth, highly polished surface. Many of the patterns must, of course, have been handed down from bygone generations, but I am inclined to attribute the majority of those I have seen to the fertile invention of Mohan Sonār, who appears to vary the design with every article produced. A common pattern is formed of flowers with eight petals, interspersed with lines, and festoons and spirals of small leaves; but the more expensive articles exhibit great diversity of design. Mohan and his brother, Makund Lāl Sonār, also practise the art of inlaying gold on silver, gold on *bider*, and silver on copper. The last method is usually employed in the manufacture of *sarposhes*.

"*Bidri* work, as far as Purnea is concerned, is a dying craft. None of the artisans who gain their living by the various processes are willing to instruct their children in the art. There is a plentiful market for the ware, but the margin of profit is small and out of all proportion to the tedium of the work. The engravers and inlayers are dependent for their material on three middle-aged Kanseris, who are resolved to let the art of preparing the *bider* die with them. The inlayers are quite ignorant of the method of preparation of the amalgum, so much so that several of them told me that lead formed the chief ingredient. Unless, therefore, steps are taken to ensure a succession of skilled craftsmen, the industry cannot last another twenty years."

To the above account it may be added that the industry does not appear to have been at any time a very large one. Twenty years ago it was reported that it was almost extinct: it took about two weeks to finish an ordinary article, while a month had to be spent in turning out an article of superior workmanship. In 1890 Mr. E. Collin found that the art was confined to four families in Belauri. The articles made were very expensive and the workmen dilatory in executing orders. "They profess," he said, "to be able to work only two hours a day. This may be due to their devotion to art, but it is probably laziness."* The present state of the industry is summed up by Mr. J. G. Cumming as follows :—"In Purnea district *bidri* ware is a dying craft, and only one man, Mohan Sonār, is left with a fertile invention in designs. It is curious that in such a small art the engravers should be

* *Report on the Existing Arts and Industries in Bengal.*

wholly dependent upon others who prepare the amalgum. These are Satua Kanseri and Mauju Kanseri of Belâuri, and Udhu Sau Kanseri of Katihār. Unless their art is studied and communicated, the industry will cease."*

Cotton weaving.

Coarse cotton cloths, called *photas* and *bukis*, are woven by the indigenous weaving castes on primitive looms in different parts of the district, but the industry is dying out owing to the competition of cheaper European piece-goods. Cotton carpets (*satranjis*) were formerly made by a few families in the town of Purnea, the thread being spun from raw cotton purchased at Ruigolā, a quarter of Purnea town, which, as its name implies, was the headquarters of the trade in imported cotton. The carpets were almost invariably of a simple striped pattern, white and blue alternating, and are described as having been very strong and durable. Cleaning of cotton is effected by Musalmāns called Dhuniyās or Nadaps, who visit the district in the cold weather months. For carding the cotton they use a wooden bow, the string of which is twanged by means of a heavy mallet called a *dihista*. The cotton is imported wholesale and sold to petty dealers called *paikārs*, who come to Ruigolā from the principal markets in this district and the adjoining districts of Mālda and Dinājpur.

Blanket weaving.

Blanket weaving is carried on by small colonies of Gareris round Katihār; but owing to the frequency of disease among the sheep, the produce of their flocks, and the consequent outturn of their looms, is uncertain. As a rule, the sheep are shorn three times a year, in March, July and November. The wool of the two first shearings is separated into white, black and grey, and produces the best blankets. All the wool of the last shearing is spun and woven without distinction, so that, if properly mixed, the colour should be grey. The women tease and spin the wool on a small wheel, and the men weave it on a primitive loom. The cloth is woven in narrow strips (*pattis*), from four to seven of which are usually stitched together to form a blanket. For producing a black colour, the wool is dyed by using the fruit of the *babul* tree as a mordant, and after washing in a solution, the wool is covered up in the ground, and a black colour is produced in consequence of the iron oxide in the earth. The blankets are said to be durable, though rough, and to command a good price.

Gunny bags.

Gunny bags are made by hand in the Kishanganj subdivision by women of the Rājbansi caste, and are purchased by small traders (*bepāris*), who carry them for sale to Kishanganj

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* *Review of the Industrial Position and Prospects of Bengal in 1908.*

and other markets on the banks of the Mahânandâ, whence they are exported to Calcutta. The gunny manufactured is of coarse texture, and, owing to the introduction of machinery, the demand for it has declined.

Miscellaneous industries. Fancy straw baskets are made in the Arāriā subdivision and mats in the Kishanganj subdivision. The mats are cheap and command a ready sale both in Purnea and the adjoining districts. The industry is chiefly carried on at Gopālpokhar on the east of Kishanganj and in its neighbourhood. Good cart wheels are made in the village of Chakla close to Kishanganj, and iron ladles and spoons in that town. Bell-metal utensils are turned out in the Kishanganj and Arāriā subdivisions, but the industry is declining. Molasses are manufactured to a fairly large extent in the Kishanganj subdivision by means of improved sugarcane pressing machines and are exported to Dinājpur, Jalpāigurī and Nepāl. Fire-works are made by a few families at Purnea, Arāriā and Kishanganj. Among other common handicrafts are the manufacture of lac bangles and glass beads and the dyeing of cloth.

TRADE. The trade of Purnea is divisible into two parts, that with Nepāl and that with British districts. The principal imports from Nepāl are rice and paddy, jute, gunny bags and mustard seed, while the principal exports to Nepāl are salt, sugar, kerosine oil, dried fish, cotton twist and piece-goods. Much of the trade with Nepāl represents a through trade. To other British districts Purnea exports rice and food-grains, jute, oil seeds, indigo, hides, dried fish and tobacco. The chief imports are rice and paddy (chiefly from Dinājpur), food-grains, sugar, salt, European piece-goods, kerosine oil, gunny bags (from Calcutta) and coal. It will be observed that the exports consist almost entirely of agricultural produce, Purnea having few manufactured goods to export. The chief mode of carriage is by rail, the river steamers and country boats dealing with a comparatively small amount of traffic.

Imports and exports.

Trade centres. The chief centres of trade are Bārsoi, Forbesganj, Kasbā, Katihār, Kharkhari, Kishanganj, Purnea and Rānīganj—all, with the exception of Rānīganj and Kharkhari, situated on the railway. The most important of these entrepots is Kasbā, 8 miles north of Purnea, where several Mārwāri firms and Messrs. Ralli Brothers have agents, who deal in jute, grain and hides. Kishanganj is another mart the importance of which has been steadily growing of late years, large firms having established themselves there for sorting and baling the jute brought in from the Bahādurganj and Kishanganj thānas.

Bazars and *hāts.* Permanent shops are rarely found except in a few big bazars, such as Bhawānīpur, Forbesganj, Islāmpur and Kishanganj. Most of the internal trade is carried on at village *hāts*, which are held on fixed days twice or thrice a week. Every village is within a few miles of some *hāt*, and the villagers go there regularly to sell or barter their wares and buy whatever they require for the ensuing week. Almost all the *hāts* are a source of profit to the proprietors, who lease them out to farmers (*mustājirs*) who in their turn levy fees (*bhatti*) in cash or in kind.

Fairs. A considerable amount of trade is also carried on at the *melas* or fairs held periodically. Of these by far the most important are those held at Kārāgolā, Khagrā and Nekmard. The Kārāgolā fair is held on the banks of the Ganges, at a place called Kāntanagar, about 2 miles east of Kārāgolā. It begins every year on the Māghi Pūrnimā or the day of the full moon of Māgh (corresponding with 15th or 16th of February) and lasts for about a fortnight. The day is looked upon by orthodox Hindus as an auspicious one, being the day on which, according to Hindu mythology, Kalijuga began, and therefore it is incumbent on them to bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges. A large concourse of people attend the place, and the fair is an important institution from a commercial point of view. The Khagrā fair is held towards the end of December. It is also the occasion of an agricultural exhibition, prizes being awarded for live stock and produce, and a number of attractions in the way of amusement are provided. The fair was started a little over 20 years ago on the initiative of Mr. A. Weekes, the then Collector of the district, and being liberally encouraged by Nawāb Saiyad Ata Husain, became an annual institution. The Nekmard fair is held in Dinājpur close to the borders of Purnea, and is attended by large numbers from this district and also from Bhāgalpur. All these fairs are also cattle markets, large droves being brought to them from the western districts of Bihār.

Nepāl trade. The trade with Nepāl has long been of importance. In 1790 the Collector reported that the exports to that country consisted of salt, betel-nuts, spices, small cardamoms, pepper, assafœtida, sugar, tobacco, cotton cloths, woollen cloths, muskets, flints, dried fish, earthen pots, and live hogs; while the imports were timber, ready-made wood-work, rice and paddy, other grains, Bhutān blankets, cotton, large cardamoms, oranges, wax, madder, drugs, lac, catechu, frankincense, iron, rhinoceros horns and hides, *mainas*, parrots and falcons. He added a note on the freedom of the traffic

from all duties. In the following year the Collector gave a detailed account of this trade, and estimated the value of the exports at Rs. 32,500 and of the imports at Rs. 3,04,000. A system of registration for the Nepāl trade was introduced in 1875, and there are now 11 registering stations, at which *muharrirs* collect statistics of the trade passing the frontier. Five are situated in the Arāriā subdivision, viz., Kuāri, Kusambhā, Mīrganj, Panthamāri and Patthārdewā, and five are in the Kishanganj subdivision, *viz.*, Bhātgāon, Dharsā, Gandharbdānga, Karābāri, Pahorā and Terāgach. The largest frontier market is Gandharbdānga, and next in importance are Jhiktiā and Nepālganj. Other frontier markets which may be mentioned are Nawābganj, Rajolā, Kursakatā, Meghā and Sikti in the Arāriā subdivision, and Digalbānk, Karabāri, Phulbāri and Karlihāt in the Kishanganj subdivision.

The chief trade routes to Nepāl are as follows:—(1) Nawābganj to Dīwānganj; (2) Amona *viâ* Sāhibganj to Dīwānganj; (3) Mīrganj to Sāhibganj; (4) Kusambhā to Patthardewā; (5) Rājolā *viâ* Dhobi to Gogrā; (6) Meghā *viâ* Harecha to Jhontiaki; (7) Kursakatā to Rangeli; (8) Sikti to Rangeli; (9) Dhubeli *viâ* Kochāhā to Chailghāzi in Nepāl; (10) Phulwāri *viâ* Terāgāch to Chailghāzi; (11) Khāniābād to Athmauzā or Athgāon in Nepāl; (12) Bairiā to Ultabāri in Nepāl; (13) Karābāri *viâ* Pulsā to Mohabāri and Baniāni in Nepāl; (14) Digalbānk *viâ* Taugandubā to Jhilmilyā in Nepāl; (15) Gandharbdanga *viâ* Khudābhitā to Pautapārā in Nepāl; (16) Tatpoā market to Lodhabāri in Nepāl; (17) Simalbāri *viâ* Ambari to Khatāmani; (18) Bhawānīganj *viâ* Chaughāti to Khāniābhitā; (19) Kālughat to Panthamāri; (20) Bhātgāon *viâ* Dhobgāchi to Dholabāri and Dohnagiri in Nepāl. The routes consist of cart tracks carried for the most part along high ground; they can be traversed with ease in the dry weather, and with some difficulty during the rains.

The following account of the customs arrangements is condensed from the *Statistical Account of Bengal.* Transit dues are levied by the Nepāl Government on both exports and imports. The frontier is divided into a certain number of sections, known as *sair mahāls*, which are farmed out for a term of years to contractors called *chaudhris*. The duty on exports from Nepāl is levied either by weight or *ad valorem*, and payment in kind is seldom received. It is paid at the time of purchase in the local market, and the purchaser is there furnished with a pass or *char chitta.* The goods are only examined on the frontier, to see if the description on the pass corresponds

with the article exported. Smuggling, if detected, is punished by the levy of double duty. As regards imports into Nepāl, the duty is levied when the goods are sold at the markets; but when the importer has a shop in Nepāl, he has to pay only a certain sum annually, and is permitted to import as much as he pleases, free of duty, provided he sells in the shop for which he is assessed. Duty on imports is generally levied in kind at so many seers in the maund. If the articles do not admit of payment in kind, and the importer has not a recognized shop, they are subjected to an *ad valorem* duty before he is permitted to retail, the rate being left entirely to the discretion of the *chaudhri*, whose object is to levy the highest amount he can without making it prohibitive of further trading. For instance, in the case of a load of brass ware passing into the Morang, the vendor of which has no shop and intends to retail from village to village, he would pay a certain sum assessed on the value of his stock, and would then be furnished with a pass authorizing him to sell his goods without any further payment of duty. The trade with Purnea is almost entirely in the hands of British subjects, such as Telis and Kalwārs, who have established shops on either side of the border.

Weights and measures.

The weights and measures in use in Purnea vary considerably. The standard seer of 80 *tolās* is in general use throughout the district, but for weighing grain, tobacco and jute, a seer of different values is used in particular localities, as shown in the margin. A seer of 132 *tolās* is also used at Kishanganj for weighing mustard oil. The value of the maund necessarily depends on the value of the seer, *e.g.*, where a seer of 68 *tolās* is used, the maund is equivalent to 50 standard seers. As regards measures of length, the ordinary yard of 36 inches is in use throughout the district for measuring cloth, but in the Arāriā subdivision a special measure called *kali*, equal to 21 inches, is used for coarse country-made cloth.

Weight in *tolās*.	Localities.
64	... Arāriā.
68	... Dharampur.
72	... Arāriā and Katihār.
85 } 88 }	... Arāriā and Kishanganj.
90 } 100 }	... Arāriā, Kadwā and Kishanganj.

The common measurements of distance are—$4\frac{1}{2}$ *hāths* = 1 *kāthā*; 20 *kāthās* = 1 *rasi*; 85 *rasis* = 1 *kos* or 2 English miles; 10 *kos* = 1 *manzal*. In practice, a *rasi* varies from 120 to 150 feet. The denominations of the standard measure of area are—$4\frac{1}{2}$ *hāths* = 1 *kāthā* or *laggā*; 20 *kāthās* or *laggās* = 1 *bighā* or one-third of an acre; but in every *pargana* the number of *hāths* to

the *laggā* or pole varies, and in some of these divisions as many as twenty different *laggās* are in use. Varying standards are often met with in neighbouring villages, and sometimes in the same village. It is reported to be 81 inches in Haveli *pargana* and in Arāriā, 91 inches in Dharampur and Kishanganj, 99 inches in other parts of Dharampur, and 108 inches in Katihār and Kishanganj.

The marginal table shows the area of the *bighā* according to the length of the *laggā* or pole used, the *hāth* being equal to 18 inches. The *bighā* of 4 *hāths* is the standard Bengal *bighā*; and both the *bighā* of $4\frac{1}{2}$ *hāths* and that of 6 *hāths* are common in Purnea.

Hāths.	Sq. yards.	Acre.
$3\frac{1}{2}$	... 1,225	... ·253
$3\frac{3}{4}$	... 1,406	... ·288
4	... 1,600	... ·333
$4\frac{1}{4}$	... 1,806	... ·373
$4\frac{1}{2}$	... 2,025	... ·418
$4\frac{3}{4}$	... 2,256	... ·466
5	... 2,500	... ·516
$5\frac{1}{2}$	... 3,025	... ·625
6	... 3,600	... ·744
$6\frac{1}{2}$	... 4,225	... ·873
7	... 4,900	... 1·012
9	... 8,100	... 1·673

The measures of capacity used for measuring grain and oil are as follows:—(1) the *koria*, equal to a seer of 80 *tolās* or 92 quarts, is in general use; (2) the *nagri*, which is equal to a seer of 90 *tolās*, is used in Arāriā; and (3) the *khatta*, which varies greatly, for it represents 5 seers of 80 or 85 *tolās* in Arāriā; 3, 4, 5 or 6 seers in Katihār; 5 seers in Badaur *pargana*; and 8 seers in the Haveli *pargana*. The seer in all these cases is that common in the locality, varying as mentioned above from 68 to 100 *tolās*. The local measures of time, besides the usual divisions of day, month, year, etc., which are the same in native as in English calculation, are as follows:—60 *pal* = 1 *danda*; 120 *danda* = 1 *ghari*; 3 *ghari* = 1 *prahar*; 4 *prahar* = 1 day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INDIGO INDUSTRY.

HISTORY. THE manufacture of indigo has been carried on for more than a century in Purnea. The first mention of it, as far as can be traced, occurs in a letter, dated the 16th January 1788, from the Collector to the Board of Revenue, in which, among other non-official Europeans resident in the district, he mentions a Mr. Coustard, "a quiet, industrious man, proprietor of a small indigo manufacture." Indigo was probably, however, a well-known crop before that time, for in the following year the Collector made a detailed report on the manner of its cultivation. He stated that the cultivation was carried on by a system of advances, at rates varying from 8 annas to Rs. 3-2-0 per *bighā* of 2,400 square *hāths* or cubits, according to the class of soil. In return for such advances the cultivator agreed to hand over the land ploughed and weeded to the planter, who merely sowed the seed. When it is remembered that at this period rice was often so cheap and abundant, that it did not pay the cost of harvesting it, it is easy to understand that indigo cultivation spread rapidly.

It appears that Nīlganj, a few miles south of the town of Purnea, was the first factory built, probably about 1775. The vats were then made of wood, and the boilers of copper. The new industry seems to have attracted much attention amongst the people, and pieces of the plant are said to have been circulated amongst the village headmen as curiosities. The Kolāsi factory in *pargana* Katihār was erected a few years afterwards. Thus, the cultivation seems at first to have progressed southwards towards the low lands subject to annual inundation from the Ganges. It was next extended to the northern *pargana* of Nāthpur, now in Bhāgalpur, Mr. Smith, whose name is still preserved in one of the Purnea bazars, taking a lease of the whole *pargana* from Government and erecting factories. Later, he carried on operations to the south, and between 1800-07 held four factories in Gondwārā. This Mr. Smith appears to have been an enterprising planter, to whom the district owes much. Establishing himself at Nāthpur, he had that place

greatly improved, the roads widened and straightened, and the jungle cut down. He induced workmen to come down from Nepāl, and, according to Buchanan Hamilton, it was owing to his laudable exertions that the greater part of the brick houses in the town of Purnea were erected. We also find that he introduced the European potato, which by 1810 had come into general use near Purnea.

Further information regarding the industry is given by Buchanan Hamilton about the year 1810. In the south-east of the district there were 17 factories, of which a number were under the management of a Mr. Ellerton of "Guyamati"; in Gondwārā there were 10 factories, of which four belonged to Mr. Smith of Nāthpur; and in the rest of the district there were no less than 50 European factories, but several of them were small and in a bad state. There were also seven factories held by two Hindus and one "native Portuguese", and about 1,000 bighās were cultivated for "the original native manufacture", which was confined to the eastern skirts of the district near the Nāgar river, where no European manufacturer had settled. Buchanan Hamilton gives some interesting particulars regarding the cultivation. "The land" he says, "on which indigo is raised is in general poor and low rented, and, where it is the only crop, does not pay more than 4 annas a *bighā* or one-quarter of the produce. Still, however, the rice is no doubt a more profitable cultivation: and in fact, the farmers (except on the poor sandy land that will not produce rice) are exceedingly backward to undertake or continue the cultivation: and many of the landlords discourage their tenantry from engaging in it by every means in their power. The manufacturers seem to incur a greater expense than they do in Ronggopoor (Rangpur). Their buildings are more expensive, and they keep an enormous establishment of oxen and carts for carrying home the plant. They almost all cultivate more or less, these cattle being idle at the ploughing season. The land which they cultivate being carefully ploughed and weeded is vastly more productive than what is neglected by the natives; and were the indigo planters more generally men who could attend to the details of agriculture, and were they allowed to rent land contiguous to their works in a quantity sufficient to supply them entirely with seed, I have no doubt that the land would be vastly more productive, and failures from the season less common. The habits and experience, however, of the greater part would render any undertaking of that kind ruinous; and there are strong reasons for the prohibition that exists against their acquiring such property."

As regards the outturn and area under cultivation, Buchanan Hamilton stated that the outturn of the four factories belonging to Mr. Smith in Gondwārā was 2,662 factory maunds (74⅗ lbs.) in eight years, and that the average annual outturn of all the ten factories in that tract was 670 maunds per annum. The area under cultivation in Gondwārā is not stated. In the south-east of the district he estimated that 74,000 *bighās* were under cultivation, and that 2,516 maunds were produced in seven years. The total amount produced by the remaining 50 factories would, he estimated, average about 3,000 maunds, and the land under actual cultivation would be about 60,000 *bighās*.

The industry appears to have been in a very flourishing condition about 30 years ago, for returns specially prepared for the Statistical Account of Bengal in 1876 show that there were 18 concerns with 59 factories, an average cultivation of 81,077 *bighās*, and an outturn of 4,667 to 4,767 maunds per annum. The exact area of the *bighā* applicable for measuring the land is not stated, but it is probable that very nearly 50,000 acres were under cultivation. The following table gives details of the industry in that year; the figures showing the area under cultivation and the outturn, are the averages for the preceding 10 years

Concern.	Factories.	Owner.	Area in *bighās*.	Outturn in maunds.
Barārā* ...	Barārā ... Gokulnagar ... Mahārājganj... Maikānt ... Parmānandpur	Mr. McAllister ...	4,000	200
Bhogāon ...	Bhogāon ...	Rai Lakshmipat Singh	2,065	105
Bhawārā ...	Bhawārā ... Dilāwari ... Jotrāmrai ... Sībganj ...	R. Walker ...	6,000	300
Deoriā ...	Deoriā ..	Mr. Bentley ...	1,000	80
Dharārā ...	Dharārā ...	E. De Souza ...	900	60
Gangaldahi ...	Nāthpur ...	......	100	...
Gidwas ...	Gidwas ...	Rai Lakshmīpat Singh	600	50
Gondwārā ...	Bahorā ... Debīpur ... Dumār ... Gonriā ... Jauniā ... Kābar ... Khawāspur ... Korhā ... Nisendra ...	H. Cave	9,194	925
Kaltai ...	Bargāwan ... Phusyan ...	......	800	85

* Locally this concern is referred to as the Mahārājganj concern.

Concern.	Factories.	Owner.	Area in *bighās*.	Outturn in maunds.
Kolāsi ...	Katihār ... Sambalpur ...	G. W. Shillingford ...	5,000	500
Lālpur ...	Lālpur ...	Miss Gouldhauke ...	900	75
Mahendrapur..	Dinapur ... Mahendrapur Mathaur ... Sanhesbaliā ...	F. Cruise	3,000	300
Mainānagar ...	Bainā ... Kāliganj ... Mahādebpur ... Mainānagar ...	G. Burnell ...	6,000	300
Manshai ...	Kirpur ... Manshai ...	C. A. Shillingford ...	5,537	299
Nīlganj ...	Banbāgh ... Bishunpur ... Kājā ... Khāga ... Masauā ... Mirzāpur ... Nīlganj ... Putilwā ... Sirsi ...	R. S. Pyne ...	13,913	675
Pirganj ...	Pirganj ..	H. Cruise ...	1,000	100
Sahārā ...	Hansaili ... Koāsi ... Sahārā ...	J. L. Shillingford ...	4,000	350 to 400
Sultānpur ...	Amonā ... Forbesābād ... Jalālgarh ... Khopdā ... Maisakhul ... Rāmpur ... Rohikpur ... Sultānpur ..	A. J. Forbes ...	17,568	368

In the preceding table the figures showing the outturn are the averages for 10 years, but, as a matter of fact, the outturn was a very uncertain quantity. In the three years 1873-75 it was 7,345 maunds, 2,203 maunds and 7,750 maunds, respectively; and it was estimated in 1877 that in an average year from 5,000 to 7,000 maunds of indigo were produced, the average price being Rs. 219 per factory maund of 74 lbs. 10 oz. In the year last mentioned the area of land under indigo cultivation was 67,000 to 70,000 acres, and there were 34 concerns in the district, with 31 outworks, of which only three were owned and managed by Indians. It was calculated that as much as 10 lakhs were annually expended by the different factories, but there are no figures showing what capital was invested in buildings, machinery and land. In some years the profit might, it was said, be as much as 100 per cent., but on an average over a number of years the profit would not amount to over 20 or 25 per cent.*

* *Statistical Reporter*, 1877.

From the following table for 1886-87 it will be apparent that the industry declined greatly within the next 10 years, there being 28 factories with an area of about 43,450 *bighās* under cultivation and an outturn of about 2,481 maunds.

Concern.	Factories.	Proprietor.	Area in *bighās*.	Outturn in
				Mds. srs.
Banbāgh ...	Banbāgh ... Bishunpur ..	W. J. Pyne ..	600	9-18
Bhogāon ...	Bhogāon ...	C. J. Shillingford ...	†	†
Bhawārā ...	Bhawārā ... Dilāwari ...	R. C. Walker ...	1,182	44-1
Gokulnagar ...	Gokulnagar ...	Bishun Chand ...	1,350	16-14
Gondwārā ...	Bahorā ... Debīpur ... Dumār ... Gonriā ... Hansaili Jauniā ... Kābar Kājā ... Khāga ... Khawāspur Korhā ... Kuāri ... Nisendra ... Pīrganj ... Sahārā ...	J. Thomas & Co. ...	22,093	1,697-29
Kajrā ...	Kajrā ...	G. J. Burnell ...	†	†
Kolāsi ...	Kolāsi ... Semapur ...	F. A. Shillingford ...	3,210‡ acres.	310‡ 0
Mahendrapur	Dasiārpur ... Mahendrapur	R. P. Irwin ...	1,187	13-0
Mainānagar ...	Bainā ... Kālīganj ... Mainānagar ...	Williams and Greenhill	5,121	122-28
Manihāri ...	Manihāri ...	E. Taylor	†	†
Manshai ..	Kīrpur ... Manshai ...	A. J. Shillingford ...	5,848	242-12
Sultānpur ...	Sultānpur ...	A. J. Forbes ...	3,409	2-41

† Returns are not available.
‡ Average of seven years.

The most interesting event in the recent history of the industry has been a combined strike against growing indigo for the Gondwārā concern on the part of the ryots in the Korhā and Damdahā thānas. This concern, including 16 factories and outworks, was held on lease from the Mahārājā of Darbhangā by the firm of Messrs J. Thomas and Company from 1888 to 1899. When the term of the lease was drawing to a close, a movement was started against growing indigo, apparently in order to prevent the firm securing a renewal of the lease. This movement, it is noticeable, originated in an area where no indigo was ever

grown, but spread to the indigo-growing area. In these circumstances, the firm gave up the lease, and the Darbhangā Rāj resumed direct possession. The Darbhangā Rāj demanded an enhancement of rents as well as the continuance of the cultivation of indigo; and the ryots refused in a body to comply with its demands. They alleged that they had agreed to an enhancement on condition that they would no longer have to grow indigo, and claimed that the double demand was a breach of faith. This charge was denied by the Rāj, which declared that no such promise had ever been made. The tension which ensued resulted in many acts of violence on the part of the ryots; and matters only quieted down when additional police were quartered and special constables appointed in the disaffected area, and after various concessions had been made by the Mahārājā.

This anti-indigo movement is described by Mr. Byrne as follows in the Settlement Report:—"It originated in a village near Bhawānipur Rājdham in thāna Damdahā where an old man, Rājā Chānd of Kishanpur, realized that it was the only means of attacking the Darbhangā Rāj, when its local officials began to insist on the cultivation of indigo, in spite of promises already made that indigo cultivation would cease when the lease of the concern to Messrs. Thomas and Company fell in. Rājā Chānd had never grown indigo, and no indigo was cultivated within 8 or 10 miles of that locality, but he feared that all rent-free lands were about to be forcibly resumed, and all excess lands assessed at a high rate. When the struggle was practically over—to his credit be it said that he and his sons were faithful to their oaths to the last, though all their confederates had come to terms with the Rāj—he explained his attitude by saying "I was like a deer pursued by Rāj hounds I fled for refuge to an indigo field."

The following is a list of the factories still (1908) manufacturing indigo. The most important is the Gondwārā concern, which had an outturn of 31,711 maunds in the nine years ending in 1899, or 3,523 maunds per annum, and of 12,605 maunds in 1900-07 or 1,576 maunds per annum. The industry shows greater vitality than in other districts of North Bihār, probably because indigo can be manufactured at a cheaper rate; but even so several factories have had to close recently, and though the area shown in the recent settlement as under indigo was 20,752 acres, it diminished to 16,500 acres in 1908.

Concern.	Factories.
Bhawārā ...	... Bhawārā.
Bhogāon ...	... Bhogāon. Jagannāthpur.

Concern.	Factories.
Gondwārā ...	Bahorā. Debīpur. Dumār. Gonriā. Jauniā. Kābar. Kājā. Korhā. Mīrganj. Nisendra. Sahārā.
Mainānagar ...	Bainā. Kālīganj. Mainānagar.
Mathurāpur (in Mālda) ...	Kāladiāra.
Manshai ...	Kīrpur. Manshai.
Sirsi ...	Sirsi.

It is worthy of note that the Purnea planters have invented or been the first to use several improved processes. The first wheel beater for oxidising the beating vat was designed by a Purnea planter, named Mr. R. Cruise, and was erected at the Dilāwari factory in 1841. The first screw propeller for beating, patented by Mr. Michea, was put up at Pīrganj factory in 1882. Mr. F. Shillingford of Kolāshi patented an improved boiler in 1887 and also introduced lever presses; while Mr. Hill, an assistant in the Gondwārā concern, is said to have originated the idea of bruising the plant before steeping.

RELATIONS OF PLANTERS AND RYOTS.

The following extracts from different reports and articles will show that the relations of planters and ryots in Purnea have, on the whole, been satisfactory, largely owing to the conditions of cultivation in this district being different from those obtaining elsewhere. On this subject Mr. G. Shillingford, managing proprietor of the Kolāsi concern, wrote in 1872:—"This district differs from other districts in that the cultivation of indigo is based more on the principle of free trade than elsewhere. In other words, it pays the ryot to cultivate indigo in Purnea, and he does so of his own free-will." He then enumerated the advantages of the Purnea system:—"(1) During the months that indigo lands are being prepared and sown, no other crop can be grown; (2) three-fourths of the indigo is sown on lands from which a crop has already been reaped; (3) in half of the lands, rice can be sown after the indigo has been cut—thus

the ryot gets three crops in one year off half his lands at least, mustard invariably preceding the indigo; (4) on all the *diāra* lands only one crop can be grown, and that is indigo, for they go under water in July, remain under water till January, and are not fit for ploughing till March; (5) the factory assists the cultivators by giving them bullocks, ploughs, money to pay off their *mahājans* or grain-lenders, and money for weeding. The bullocks they keep for good, and cultivate their other crops with them. The money we advance bears no interest during the season in which the advances are made. The Collector in 1873 endorsed these statements to a large extent. "The planters," he wrote, "are for the most part gentlemen who have been born and bred in this district, and who are consequently known to, and understood by, the ryots. Either the land here does not require, or, at all events, is not considered to require, so much weeding and care as is given to it in other districts either in Bengal or Bihar. At the time indigo is sown near the Ganges no other crop will grow. It will also grow on land from which mustard has been reaped. For these reasons, no difficulty is ever found by the planters in getting ryots to take advances. Some gentlemen who possess interest in land sublet it on condition that the rent is paid in indigo. Petty differences occasionally arise between planters and their ryots, such as always will crop up in all business transactions; but I have seen none of that universal disaffection and discontent which prevailed for years in Bengal."

This account is confirmed by that given in the *Statistical Reporter* in 1877, which is as follows:—"There seems little doubt that cultivation of indigo in this district is remunerative to the cultivator. Much of the sowing and cutting goes on during a time when no other crop can be sown or cut. Indigo, again, is often sown on land from which other crops have been cut, and rice is also sometimes sown on land after the indigo is cut. On some low *char* lands nothing but indigo can be grown. It is believed that under these circumstances, and if the ryot is fairly paid by measurement for his crop, indigo cultivation proves amply remunerative to him. Besides the village cultivation, every factory gives permanent employment to a large number of men as peons, blacksmiths, carpenters, thatchers, gardeners, ploughmen, and ordinary coolies. All classes of ryots cultivate indigo; some cultivate as much as 100 *bighās*, some as little as a quarter of a *bighā*. The planters, moreover, assist their ryots in many ways, by giving them bullocks and ploughs, and by advancing money for which they take no interest as long as indigo is grown for them."

In 1888, again, Mr. F. Shillingford wrote:—"We have never found any difficulty in getting the ryots to grow the crop. During the last five years in this concern, I find that they have sown on an average 33 per cent. of land in excess of the quantity they were under contract to cultivate. The better class of ryots sow double and treble the area they contract for, and many sow indigo for this factory without any contract or without taking any money whatsoever towards its cultivation, we merely supplying the seed. At the neighbouring factory of Manshai one farmer alone sows about 200 acres, and he does not hold or live on factory lands. The price was raised 25 per cent. in 1880, and first, second and third cuttings are paid for at the same rate. I have known 110 bundles of first and second cuttings obtained from one acre of land, and the field had been only roughly sown and never weeded. Rent for the class of land on which indigo is sown is nominal, being from eight annas to one rupee per acre. Moreover agricultural labour is scarce, and the cultivation of indigo consists of little more than a mere scratching of the ground."

Another favourable account of the happy relations existing between the planters and the ryots was given in 1889 by Mr. H. G. Cooke, the then Collector. "So far," he wrote, "as I can learn, indigo cultivation is extremely popular with the cultivators, and during the past three years I have not heard a single complaint against any of the old established factories of the district. Experience has shown that the ordinarily patient, law-abiding cultivator of Purnea can turn on occasion, but neither by lawless violence nor by a resort to the courts have I ever found the indigo cultivator of Purnea set himself in opposition to the old planting families of the district. This I attribute to various causes, among which may be mentioned the kindly and patriarchal relations that are maintained between these old Purnea planter families and the ryots. Such planters are, I believe, the ryot's best friends; they assist him in his difficulties with advice and money, and are deservedly looked up to and respected for their fair dealing and kindness. Added to this, the system itself is a sound one, and no coercion is necessary, as it pays the ryot to grow plant to sell to the factory in whose *dihāt* his lands lie. Most of the indigo plant produced for manufacture is grown by ryots on their own lands, the plant being delivered at the factory and paid for after being measured by means of a chain. That the rates paid are remunerative is shown by the circumstance that a ryot very often plants a great deal more land with indigo than he has covenanted to do. He receives an

advance of two rupees a *bighā* for perhaps 10 *bighās*, and of his own accord sows 20 or more *bighās*, which seems to prove that, in these instances at least, the ryots derive more profit from disposing of an indigo crop to the planter than from raising any other produce.

"The only fact that differentiates the system from a theoretically perfect one is that the *dihāt* system exists, and that each planter enjoys a monopoly of the right of contract for supplying indigo within certain well-recognized boundaries, which boundaries are generally faithfully observed. A ryot who raises indigo must deliver it to the planter within whose *dihāt* or monopoly area he holds his land; but against this it may be said that the planters are at perfect liberty to enter into any agreement for their common benefit, and no ryot is in any way forced to cultivate indigo; while those who elect to do so, enter into a regular agreement with the planter and accept an advance from him. The monopoly, if monopoly it can be called, rests on the good faith of the planters among themselves; it is not that a ryot cannot sell his indigo or demand an advance from a planter other than the one in whose *dihāt* his land lies, but that no other planters would buy his produce or give him an advance; so that if the system is not theoretically quite perfect, in practice it works well."*

The following is a description of the methods of cultivation. In October, what are technically known as the settlements take place. The cultivators attend at the factory office, where they are paid up all that may be due to them for indigo delivered during the preceding season, and take advances for the ensuing crop. The agreement sometimes covers as long a term as ten years, and it generally binds the ryot (1) to grow indigo on a certain quantity of land, exclusively for the particular factory making the advance; (2) not to sell the indigo plant produced on this land to any other factory; (3) to get the land ready in proper time for sowing; (4) to sow it when ready; (5) to weed it at the proper time, with the aid of the factory servants; (6) to cut the plant when required to do so; (7) to deliver a certain quantity of bundles per rupee. The planter binds himself (1) to take any seed the plant may produce, before or after cutting, at a fixed rate; (2) to make good any loss the cultivator may suffer from wilful negligence by the factory servants; and, in most cases, (3) to pay for the carriage of the plant either by cart or boat to the factory. In November and December, as soon as the settlements have been completed, or during the settlements, should CULTIVATION.

* Calcutta Review, Vol. LXXXVIII, pp. 243-44.

they be prolonged, the planter measures the field for which his ryots have contracted, in order to see that he has the exact quantity and proper description of land.

In some places sowing begins in October on the higher alluvial lands, after the floods retire, and while the fields still retain much moisture. The seed is sown broadcast, and no ploughing is requisite. This system is called *khakti*. In most factories, however, no land can be sown till February, when the *māgh* or *māghāt* sowing takes place on high land from which the *māghāt tori* or red mustard crop has been reaped, and on other high land which retains its moisture. At the end of February lower alluvial lands, in March the higher riverside or *diāra* lands, which are subject to inundation, and in April the lower lands of this description are sown. The planter generally waits for rain before he sows; but sometimes he adopts the method called *hararā* or *kharan*, in which there are many successive ploughings and harrowings until the soil is thoroughly dry and pulverized, when the seed is scattered broadcast and a favourable shower is awaited. In some parts of the district very high land is not sown till the end of April, or even till within a few weeks of the setting in of the rains. In the south of the district, if there is a good fall of rain of Baisākh (April-May), the cultivators sow fields, from which *purbi tori* or white mustard has been harvested, with *baisākhi* indigo. This crop is raised by the ryots in what is termed *fāzil* cultivation, *i.e.*, they do not contract for it, but sow it of their own accord, over and above what they settle for by agreement.

High lands require more cultivation than low lands, twelve ploughings (*bārah chās*) being necessary. On low lands only six are given, while land from which a *tori* crop has been taken does not receive more than four ploughings. Weeding commences in April, and consists in removing only the larger weeds or young plants of the *jhau* tree (*Tamarix dioica*). When the earlier sowings are 3 to 4 feet high, the plant is cut, leaving about half a foot still standing, in the hope of obtaining second and third cuttings from it. The first cuttings are called *murhan*, and the others *khunti*. In the south of the district, indigo sometimes stands six and eight feet high before it is cut.

MANUFACTURE. The manufacture of indigo, which is called *mahai*, begins in June, the first process being the steeping of the plant in water in order to extract by fermentation the colouring principle of the plant. The plant is brought from the fields in small bundles, called *pūlās* which are closely stacked in rectangular steeping vats built of strong brickwork faced inside with Portland cement. The capacity of these vats varies from 1,000 to 1,500 cubic feet,

the latter size taking about 600 *pūlās*, 18 inches in diameter, of "first cuttings" to fill. The bundles are arranged in two layers in the steeping vats, the lower layer being placed upright with the branches pointing upwards, whilst the upper layer rests on the first in an inverted position, so that the best leaf is massed in the middle of the vat. Occasionally, when the plant is small, a third layer of bundles, laid on their sides, is inserted between the other two. A number of stout bamboos are then laid parallel to one another over the topmost layer. On the bamboos, and at right angles, to them, are fixed strong beams or rails, which prevent the plants from rising over the sides of the vats when they swell during fermentation. The next process is to pump water into the steeping vats, with as little delay as possible after the bundles have been stacked; otherwise the plant is apt to generate heat and "burn," as the resultant blackening of the leaf is technically termed. The water is obtained either directly from a river or tank, or in the first instance is collected in large masonry reservoirs, from which it is pumped or run into the vats as required. The latter method is preferred, as it admits of a rough filtration and gives time for the suspended impurities to settle below the level of the surface water. The temperature of water in reservoirs is also raised by the sun's heat appreciably higher than in tanks or rivers.

The steeping vats being filled with water, the compressed plant is allowed to ferment from ten to twelve hours, but in cold damp weather fifteen to eighteen hours are necessary. As it is important that the plant should not be oversteeped, various tests are observed to ascertain when fermentation is complete. The three best known are the following:—(1) During fermentation bubbles of hydrogenous gases come to the surface and are easily ignited on the application of a lighted match; but when this process has run its full course, a non-inflammable gas, carbonic dioxide, is given off by the submerged plant. (2) The temperature of the vat continues to rise until the climax of fermentation has been attained, when it immediately begins to decrease. (3) The level of the surface of the liquor in the vats rises until fermentation ceases, when it begins to fall slowly. To the experienced eye, however, the general appearance of the steeping vat is sufficient indication when the liquor, containing the dye in solution, should be drawn off, through drain holes placed on a level with the floor of the vat, and allowed to pour in to the "beater vat," in which machinery is employed.

The beater vat, which is also built of brickwork, is generally long and shallow, divided along the greater part of its length into

three compartments by two parallel walls, which leave spaces at both ends for the free circulation of the current. Butler's wheel, driven by portable steam engines, is the favourite form of beating machinery. The result of this process is to oxydise the clear greenish liquor by the influence of atmospheric air, from which oxygen is absorbed, and particles or "grains", as they are termed, of indigo colouring matter are separated. During the beating, the carbonic dioxide previously present in the liquid is set free, and forms on the surface, in conjunction with air bubbles, a deep blue froth, which disappears as the oxydization is completed or is reduced by a little rape-seed oil being sprinkled over it. In minor factories, in which steam power is not in use, coolies are employed to beat with paddles or *pharuās*, at first slowly and gently and afterwards more quickly and strongly. Eight to fourteen men are required for each vat according to its size.

As the froth subsides, the grains of indigo begin to precipitate themselves, leaving a clear supernatant liquid; and in three to four hours they have completely settled. The clear water above is then drawn off and allowed to run into the waste drains, leaving at the bottom of the beater vat a thick sediment of indigo colouring matter, called *māl* and technically termed the "fecula". This is passed into the fecula vat, and thence pumped without much delay into boilers. It is only in the boilers that any attempt is made at refining or cleansing. The grains of indigo, which when once formed are insoluble in water, are washed with clean warm water, which after a second subsidence is run off carrying with it vegetable matter and other impurities. This operation is repeated as often as time will allow.

The boiled fecula is next taken on to a trough or "table," as it is technically termed, on which is stretched a strong cloth supported by a kind of trellis-work. On this cloth the fecula is deposited by repeatedly returning the liquor that has passed through the cloth into the trough, until the liquor draining through the cloth appears of a straw or sherry colour with an entire absence of a blue tint. It is then allowed to flow into the waste drain, and the fecula deposited on the cloth in the trough—which by this time has the consistency of jelly—is collected and put into rectangular press-boxes made of wood with numerous holes on all sides for letting out surplus water. The boxes are first lined with stout cloth and then filled with fecula, after which pressure is applied by means of lever-presses. After the indigo in the press-boxes has undergone pressure for about eight to twelve hours, and the slabs of indigo feel hard to the touch, the press-boxes are dismantled, and the slabs cut into

small cubes, which are put into the drying godown on shelves. The godown is kept more or less dark so as to prevent too rapid drying which is apt to crack and splinter the cakes. In November and December, when the cakes are thoroughly dry, they are packed into mango wood chests, containing on an average about 4½ to 4 maunds of indigo, and forwarded to Calcutta for sale.

INDIGO-SEED GROWING.

In conclusion, a special branch of the indigo industry may be mentioned, viz., that of growing indigo seed for sale. This was formerly practised on a large scale, but is now practically extinct, though it has recently been taken up again at the Gokulnagar factory. It is described as follows in *Sport and Work on the Nepal Frontier*, by James Inglis (Maori),: —"Besides indigo planting proper, there is another large branch of industry in North Bhāgalpur and along the Nepāl Frontier there, and in Purnea, namely, the growing of indigo seed for the Bengal planters. The system of advances, and the mode of cultivation is much the same as that followed in indigo planting proper. The seed is sown in June or July, is weeded and tended all through the rains, and cut in December. The planters advance about four rupees a bighā to the ryot, who cuts his seed plant, and brings it into the factory threshing-ground, where it is beaten out, cleaned, weighed, and packed in bags. When the seed has been threshed out and cleaned, it is weighed, and the ryot or cultivator gets four rupees for every maund. The previous advance is deducted. The rent or loan account is adjusted, and the balance made over in cash. Others grow the seed on their own account, without taking advances, and bring it to the factory for sale."

CHAPTER X.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS.

THE district is well provided with means of communication whether by rail, road or river. There are nearly two miles of road to every square mile of superficial area; and the whole district is traversed by a number of rivers on which navigation is possible. There are also 181 miles of railway line open to traffic, and, as soon as the Katihār-Godāgari line is opened, 16 more miles will be added to this length.* There are two railway systems, viz., the Bengal and North-Western Railway connecting the district with other districts on the west, and the Eastern Bengal State Railway connecting it with places to the north and east; while a ferry steamer across the Ganges links it up with the East Indian Railway at Sāhibganj. Purnea is thus easy of access from outside; but half a century ago the journey to it was a tedious and expensive affair, as may be realized by the marginal table showing the time spent in and the expense of, transit, travelling, from Calcutta. The route is described as follows in an old guide-book.

	DISTANCE.	COST.	TIME.
	Miles.	Rs.	Hours.
Calcutta to Sāhibganj (railway)	220	21	9¼
Sāhibganj to Kārāgolā Ghāt (steam ferry).	20	3	7
Kārāgolā to Purnea (dâk) ...	28	14	9
Purnea to Dingrā Ghāt (dâk) ..	22	11	6
Dingra Ghāt to Kishanganj (dâk)	20	10	6
Kishanganj to Titālya (dâk) ...	38	19	11

"From the 15th June till the 15th November the Nadiā rivers (Bhāgīrathī, Jalangī and Mātābhānga) are generally open. When one of these rivers is open—and a depth throughout of 1½ feet is sufficient for a 600-maund country boat with passengers and luggage—a boat can conveniently make the passage in about three weeks up to Kishanganj on the Mahānadī. The boats generally employed by passengers are either the budgerow (of which class the pinnace is only a variety) or the ordinary country boat (*pateh*).

* This line has since been opened.

The former is usually hired either at so much for the trip or by the day. A large boat of this class could not probably be engaged for the trip to Kishanganj under Rs. 250. Budgerows, therefore, are only suited to those whose larger incomes enable them to travel without much regard to expense, the more so as it is generally expected that a cook-boat shall accompany them, thereby entailing the hire of a small country boat for this purpose in addition to that of the budgerow itself. For our own part—and we have travelled many hundreds of miles at all seasons and in every description of boat—we prefer a good clean country boat, as the cheaper, the cooler, the faster, and the least troublesome of the two. The cost of a country boat is Rs. 3 for every hundred maunds for the trip, Rs. 5 a month for the *mānjhi*, who steers, Rs. 4 a month for the *golehiā*, whose duties are similar to those of a leadsman, and Rs. 3-8 a month for each dandee or rower. For instance, a 600-maund boat to Kishanganj in July with a crew of eight men would cost as follows:—The boat at Rs. 3 per 100 maunds = Rs. 18; 1 *mānjhi* at Rs. 5 for three weeks = Rs. 3-12; 1 *golehiā* at Rs. 4 for three weeks = Rs. 3; 6 dandees at Rs. 3-8 for three weeks = Rs. 15-12:—in all, Rs. 40-8.

"The best route is from Calcutta up the Hooghly and Bhāgīrathī, past Kālnā, Kātwā and Berhampore, into the Ganges. On reaching the Ganges turn to the right down the stream about 30 miles, and turn to the left up the Mahānadī past Mālda and Dulālganj to Kishanganj. We have ourselves performed this voyage in June in three weeks."*

The Bihār section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway from Pārbatīpur traverses the south of the district from Kachnā near the border of Dinājpur to Katihār (31 miles from Kachnā), and thence runs due south for 23 miles to Manihāri Ghāt on the Ganges. This section, which was formerly known as the Purnea section of the Assam-Bihār State Railway, was opened to traffic in 1887. From Manihāri Ghāt a ferry steamer runs to Sakrigāli Ghāt on the other side of the river, and from the latter *ghāt* there is a branch line to Sāhibganj, which keeps up connection with the Loop Line of the East Indian Railway system. From Katihār the Barauni-Katihār branch of the Tirhut section of the Bengal and North-Western Railway runs, parallel to the Ganges, to Kurselā, a distance of 24 miles. There is thus a railway line throughout the whole of the south of the district from Kachnā to Kurselā, 55 miles in length. The Kosi is spanned near Kurselā by a railway bridge, which is an excellent piece of engineering

RAILWAYS.

* Captain J. G. Hathorn, R.A., *Handbook of Darjeeling*, Calcutta, 1863.

work, and there is another fine bridge over the Mahānandā near Bārsoi.

In the east and west of the district two branches of the Eastern Bengal State Railway run north from the Pārbatīpur-Katihār line. To the east there is a branch, known as the Bārsoi-Kishanganj branch, from Bārsoi junction to Kishanganj (35 miles long). It is proposed to extend this line to Mahesri *viâ* Kāliāganj and thence to Titālya and Jalpāigurī. To the west another branch line, known as the Kosi branch, runs north-west from Katihār to Forbesganj (68 miles). Till a few years ago there was a continuation of this latter line as far as Anchrā Ghāt on the Kosi river, but the constant shifting of that river led to its abandonment, as in the rains the embankment was breached by floods and the traffic in the cold weather was too small to pay for its maintenance. An extension from Forbesganj to Nepālganj on the Nepāl border is now (1908) under construction.

In the south-east of the district an important new line of railway is under construction* from Katihār to Godāgari on the Ganges. This line will pass through the Purnea district for 16 miles, run through the centre of the Mālda district for a distance of 89 miles, and meet the Ganges nearly opposite the terminus of the Murshidābād branch of the Eastern Bengal State Railway at Lālgolā.

ROADS.

The District Board maintains a large number of roads with an aggregate length of 2,113 miles. The length of metalled roads is 123 miles, of which the Ganges-Darjeeling road accounts for 106½ miles. The length of unmetalled roads is 1,601 miles; while the aggregate length of other roads, *i.e.*, of village tracks, is 389 miles. Owing to the floods caused by the overflow of rivers in the rains, the difficulty of maintaining many of these roads is considerable, especially in thānas Rānīganj and Damdahā. The most important roads are (1) the Ganges-Darjeeling road, (2) the road from Jankinagar Ghāt to Abādpur, passing through Purnea, Kadwā and Bārsoi (75 miles long), and (3) that from Patthardewā to Manihāri passing through Forbesganj, Arāriā, Purnea and Katihār (84 miles long).

Ganges-Darjeeling road.

The only road which calls for special mention is the Ganges-Darjeeling road. This road is one of the historic roads of the Province, for, prior to the construction of the railway north of the Ganges, it formed the main route to Darjeeling; for travellers from Calcutta and elsewhere, who came to Kārāgolā by rail, river or road and then went along it to the foot of

* Now open to traffic.

the hills. Its total length from Manihāri to Silīgurī is 120 miles, and it is metalled throughout and bridged except at Dingra Ghāt, where it crosses the Mahānadī. It is also overshadowed by magnificent trees, with scarcely an interval, except where it passes over the Mahānadī and in a few places where trees will not grow. There are well-built *pakkā* staging bungalows at Kārāgola on the river bank, at Purnea (mile 27), Dingra Ghāt (mile 49, where the river Mahānandā is crossed in boats), Kishanganj (mile 69), Alwābāri (mile 91) and Titalyā (mile 108), the last being just beyond the district border. Between these there are smaller *kachchā* bungalows at Jhiktiā (mile 10), Chitoriā Pīr (mile 19), Belgāchia (mile 41), Asurgarh (mile 57), Gaisal (mile 79) and Choprā (mile 99). For a long time the road was kept up as a military road, but with the extension of railway communications to the north of the Ganges, its importance dwindled. It was made over to the District Board in 1888 by the Public Works Department, and a special allomtent of Rs. 28,552 is provided annually for its upkeep.

The common country cart (*sagar*) of Bihār drawn by bullocks is in universal use. It is a two-wheeled cart, with a framework made of bamboo and wood, and having bamboo poles projecting from each side in front. This conveyance is used both for carrying passengers and country produce. For the former a hood is provided, roughly made of split bamboos arched and covered with a coarse gunny, a tarpaulin or a worn-out *satranji*. This is done during inclement weather or when the passengers are females, who, according to the custom of the country, do not appear in public. The more well-to-do keep *chāmpanis* for the purpose of travelling. The *chāmpani* is a covered cart built of wood, and is provided with a pair of springs upon the axle. It is drawn by a pair of trotting bullocks, which can go at a good pace. The best *chāmpanis*, furnished with cushions and lamps, cost about Rs. 200 each, exclusive of the cattle, which may be had for Rs. 80 to Rs. 100 a pair. Another kind of cart is the *raharu*, which is however rare. It is a light-built two-wheeled cart, like an *ekkā*, drawn by a pair of dwarf bullocks called *gaina*. At the back of the tray-like body there is a kind of canopied seat for the use of passengers, the driver taking his seat in front, as in the *chāmpani*. *Ekkās* drawn by ponies are also very rare and, in fact, almost unknown. *Pālkis* are owned by almost all the big landholders, but otherwise their use is almost confined to the towns. They are also in demand on the occasion of marriages to convey the bridegroom (*dulka*) to the house of his bride's father. A modified form of the *pālki* called *nalki* is used by well-to-do people for wedding CONVEYANCES.

festivals, when it is decorated with red fringes and tinsel. This is a palanquin supported on wooden pillars with a domed roof, the sides being open, so that the gaudily dressed bridegroom may be seen to advantage during the marriage procession or *barāt*. The litter called *doli* is used by the middle classes for the conveyance of women and old persons. The use of pack-ponies is general, nearly every petty dealer in grain and other merchandise having a pony to carry his goods to and from the market.

WATER COMMUNICATIONS.

The river steamers plying on the Ganges touch at Manihāri in the south of the district, but there is no steamer traffic on the rivers flowing through the district. Both the main Kosi and the Damdahā Kosi, as far as Rānīganj, are navigable for large boats. Country boats can also ascend the Kālā Kosi as far as Hardah bridge, where the river is crossed by the Ganges-Darjeeling road, and can go up the Saurā as far as Captain Ghāt at Purnea. With the advent of railways, this traffic has largely fallen off. Still, a certain number of boats ply on the Damdahā Kosi and take grain to Sāhibganj for the Ganges river steamers. Boats also formerly plied on the Mahānandā up as far as Kāliāganj and down through Mālda to the Ganges. Now they prefer to transfer their cargoes to the railway at Dalkhola or Bārsoi junction.

POSTAL COMMUNICATIONS.

The district contains 73 post offices and 403 miles of postal communication. The number of postal articles delivered in 1907-08 was 2,033,434, including 1,010,178 letters, 778,336 post-cards, 109,720 packets, 102,050 newspapers and 33,150 parcels. There are 8 postal-telegraph offices (from which 19,857 messages were issued in that year), situated at Purnea, Arāriā, Bārsoi Ghāt, Forbesganj, Katihār, Kishanganj, Purnea City and Srīnagar. The value of money orders issued was Rs. 21,87,726, and of those paid Rs. 5,79,629; while the number of Savings Bank deposits was 5,382, and the amounts deposited aggregated Rs. 1,76,355.

CHAPTER XI.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

THE earliest record of the land revenue of the district appears in Todar Mal's rent-roll of 1572. The *parganas* which now make up the district were then comprised in three *Sarkārs*, viz., Puraniyā, Tājpur and Monghyr. *Sarkār* Monghyr included the Dharampur *pargana*, which was assessed at 40,00,000 *dāms*, *i.e.*, at the rate of 40 *dāms* to one Akbarshāhi rupee, one lakh. The portion of the district east of the Mahānandā fell in *Sarkār* Tājpur, which also contained the west of Dinājpur and had in all 29 *mahāls*, of which seven, assessed at about Rs. 74,000, can be identified with the present *parganas* of Badaur, Bhaura, Dilāwarpur, Kumāripur, Maldwar, Sūrjyapur and Tājpur. The greater part of the district, as now constituted, formed *Sarkār* Puraniyā, which consisted of nine *mahāls*. One of these was called the *Fil Mahāl*, the revenue of which was derived from dues paid on elephants caught in the Tarai forests. The remaining eight were Asonja (the present Asja), Dalmalpur, Haveli Puraniyā, Jairāmpur (not identified), Katihār, Kadwā, Srīpur and Sultānpur, which were assessed at 64,23,633 *dāms*, *i.e.*, approximately Rs. 1,60,000. The area thus assessed was about three-fifths of the present district; and the revenue of the whole district is roughly estimated at Rs. 3,34,000. REVENUE HISTORY.

A revision of the assessment was carried out by Murshid Kuli Khān (1704-25), under whose administration Purnea was included in the *chaklā* or revenue division of Akbarnagar (Rājmahāl). The revision, however, only affected Purnea in a very limited degree, for, as a frontier military province, the greater part of the land was assigned as *jāgīr* for the maintenance of troops. The revenue assessed on the revenue-paying portion (known as *pargana* Srīpur Dalmalpur) was Rs. 2,78,830, but of this amount Rs. 1,80,166 were assigned to the *Faujdār* Saif Khān (1722-52) as a *rakmi jāgir* or personal grant of revenue. About this time there were large additions to the district area by conquest towards the north, and by the annexation of 4 *parganas* west of the Kosi, viz., Dhaphar, Nāthpur, Dharampur

and Garāri. Nāthpur is now a *pargana* of Bhāgalpur, and the revenue of the remaining 3 *parganas* was assessed at Rs. 3,03,577, no part of which found its way into the provincial treasury. The revenue demand for the whole district was thus Rs. 5,82,517, but Saif Khān is said to have realized 18 lakhs both from revenue and *ābwābs* or cesses. With the exception of a little under one lakh (Rs. 98,664), which was remitted to the treasury at Murshidābād, the whole of this large sum was retained by him as *jāgīr* for the support of himself and his troops.*

Shujā-ud-dīn Khān (1725-39), the successor of Mursid Kulī Khān, seems to have made an effort to regulate this great estate. Some time before his death in 1739, he redistributed its lands into a revenue-paying portion, valued at Rs 2,14,854, and a *jāgīr* portion, valued at Rs. 1,29,374. It was also subjected to considerable *ābwābs*, which, it would seem, were never levied or brought to credit in the Murshidābād treasury, on whose books they were borne. The *ābwābs* were the following:—(1) *Khāsnavisi*, a fee paid by the zamīndārs to the officers and clerks of the treasury. It was supposed to amount to Rs. 2,373, but it is easy to understand that the powerful military chiefs of Purnea would not submit to such an impost. (2) The second was called *zar mahtūt*, and consisted of four lesser component charges, viz., (*a*) *nazar punyā*, presents exacted from landholders at the time of the annual settlements; (*b* *bhāi khilat*, a fee taken from zamīndārs to recoup the Nawāb for the dresses of honour that he bestowed on them every year at the same period; (*c*) *pushtābandihi*, a charge for embanking the rivers in the vicinity of Murshidābād; (*d*) *rasum nizārat*, a commission of 10 annas in every thousand rupees, levied by the officer in command of the treasury guard at Murshidābād on all revenue remittances from outlying districts. (3) The third, the *fauzdāri ābwāb*, was the cause of much ill-feeling between the Purnea Governors and the Murshidābād Nawābs, and it is almost certain it was never realized. It was an additional assessment of Rs. 2,83,027 on the revenue portion of the estate, which was extended northward during the administration of Saif Khān. The Marāthā *Chaut* of Rs. 24,018, if ever actually demanded, was not paid. The above facts show that, even when the power of the *Faujdārs* was at its height, the land revenue demand amounted to over 6½ lakhs of rupees.

This state of things continued unchanged under the tyranny of Sirāj-ud-daula and the feeble administration of Mīr Jafar

* Fifth Report (Madras reprint, 1883), pp. 265, 269, 302-3. Further details will be found on pp. 409-15 of that report.

† Fifth Report, p. 279.

Khân. About 1760, however, the pressing demands of the English made Mīr Kāsim Alī look around for new sources of revenue. The wealthy province of Purnea was one of the first to be examined and re-assessed. It was then discovered that its three last *Faujdārs* had derived from it a land revenue of over 21 lakhs of rupees. The re-assessment in the first year of its application brought in an actual increase of revenue of Rs. 15,23,725; and the total amount collected was Rs. 21,09,415, including Rs. 74,134 collection charges, Rs. 56,071 for the maintenance of frontier garrisons, and Rs. 33,805 paid away in State charity. The net land revenue of the district, therefore, was Rs. 19,45,405. The collections, however, soon fell off. In 1764 Nanda Kumār (Nuncomar) reduced the net revenue to Rs. 17,88,174 by deducting twice over the charges for collection and establishment; and in 1765, on the assumption by the Company of the *Dīwāni*, it was again reduced, by the same expedient, to Rs. 14,22,536. Fraudulent reductions of a similar character were going on throughout Bengal, and to make up for them the demand for the whole province was raised in 1766 by 11 lakhs, of which 1¼ lakh fell to the share of Purnea, its revenue demand being thus 15½ lakhs. In 1768 it was found that no less than 21⅛ lakhs had been collected from the zamīndārs in the name of Government, and the demand was, therefore, raised to Rs. 17,31,000, only to fall next year to Rs. 13,42,000.

The gradual steps by which the great revenue of Purnea became thus diminished have been given at considerable length by Mr. J. Grant, in his "Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finance of Bengal" quoted in *The Fifth Report of the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East Indian Company* (1812). His conclusion is expressed as follows:—"If, under these successive fluctuations, it were asked on what principle they were brought about, no one can controvert the fact that they were the mere sleight-of-hand tricks of a crafty *mutassaddi* corruptly subservient to the chicanery of his master, who himself was, in all probability, profoundly ignorant of every local circumstance that ought to influence a change, or entirely regardless of the measure of public receipts, provided there was no diminution in the standard of what came into his private coffers by barefaced peculation."

In 1770 the year of the great famine, the gross demand was 14 lakhs, the collections being a little over 12 lakhs. In 1772 the demand fell still lower in consequence of abundant harvests, which brought down the price of rice by 200 per cent. It was reduced to 11½ lakhs, nor was the limit of the falling off in the

revenue reached even then. In 1789, and down to the time of the Permanent Settlement, little more than 8 lakhs was collected, or only a little more than one-third of the assessment of Mīr Kāsim Alī. Besides this, 645,430 *bighās*, or 350,000 acres of land, had been separated from the revenue-paying area under various pretexts, principally as grants for charitable and religious purposes, but really collusively retained by landholders of different degrees.

The Permanent Settlement was concluded with 38 proprietors owning 36 estates, and the total revenue settled with them was just under 12½ lakhs, of which Rs. 6,81,796 were due from the three *parganas* of Sūrjyapur, Dharampur and Haveli. Subsequently, as the result of the resumption proceedings between 1836 and 1846, 1,550 estates, which had escaped assessment and were held revenue-free under an invalid title, were resumed and brought on the revenue-roll. The area affected was 425 square miles, and the increase of revenue was just under one lakh.

SURVEYS AND SETTLEMENTS.

The revenue survey was carried out in this district between 1844 and 1848. In 1887-90 a settlement was made of the Maldwar estate covering an area of 58 square miles, and in 1887-92 of 201 square miles comprised in the Srīnagar Banaili estate. Survey and settlement operations were carried on in the remainder of the district in 1901—1908. The distribution of the area dealt with during this last settlement under the different tenancies is shown in the following table:—

STATUS.	Number of tenancies.	Total so held. (Acres).	Percentage to total occupied area.	Average size of each tenancy. (Acres)
Lands held by proprietors ...	2,554	49,844	2·2	20·5
Cultivated by tenure-holders ...	47,303	426,788	19·0	9·0
Ryots at fixed rates ...	19,952	115,205	5·1	5·7
Settled and occupancy ryots ...	436,759	1,549,604	69·0	3·5
Non-occupancy and *diāra* ryots	21,715	72,546	3·2	3·3
Rent-free holders	10,843	30,150	1·3	2·5
Under-ryots with occupancy rights.	59,202	61,544	2·7	1·03
Under-ryots without occupancy rights.	39,537	45,689	2·0	1·1

With regard to this table it should be explained that the average size of each ryoti holding is no index to the actual amount of land held by each ryot, for one tenant frequently holds several tenancies, each liable for a separate item of rent. The old ancestral holdings and those held at favourable rents are adhered to

with grim tenacity, even though floods may keep them submerged for months or even for a couple of years. On the other hand, tenancies recently taken up are abandoned freely, when their productive power has been impaired, or when the tenant can no longer make a profit out of them.

LAND TENURES. The various forms of land tenure prevailing in Purnea are, for the most part, the same as in other districts of the Division. Detailed description is, therefore, confined to the cases where tenures present distinct characteristics.

Zamīndāris. The Decennial Settlement of Purnea, which was concluded in the year 1790, when Mr. Heatly was Collector and Mr. Colebrooke (who carried out the measure) Assistant Collector, was made with the zamīndārs for entire *parganas* or fractions of *parganas*. There were then 36 estates with 38 proprietors, whereas the number of estates borne on the *tauzi* or revenue-roll is now (1,909) 1,707 of which 205 are revenue-free estates. There are two *tauzi* serials:—(1) a *fasli* serial for the Fasli *mahāls*, *i.e.*, all estates in *parganas* Dharampur, Harwat, Dhaphar and Chai; (2) a Bengali serial for the Bengali *mahāls* in the remainder of the district. Of 1,712 revenue-paying estates, 461 are in the Fasli and 1,251 in the Bengali serial. This almost unique system is believed to date back to the conquest of the *parganas* west of the old Kosi by the *Faujdār* Saif Khān about 1731.

About half the land revenue of the district is paid by three estates, viz., Dharampur, Haveli and Sūrjyapur, and the total incidence of revenue paid by permanently-settled estates (which extend over 4,742 square miles) is only annas 6-2. The gross rental for the district in 1872, when road and public works cess was first levied, was Rs. 28,59,695. The gross rental for the year ending 31st March 1902 was Rs. 35,30,747, and that for the year ending 31st March 1908 was Rs. 43,83,196, the total land revenue demand for the same year being Rs. 11,79,591, including temporarily-settled estates. "The contrast between these figures is," Mr. Byrne observes, "remarkable, the present gross rental being more than double the highest known revenue demand from the district and the present revenue demand being less than half the highest revenue demand."

Another respect in which Purnea is unique among North Bihār districts is that there has been but little subdivision of proprietary interests. In 1867 the number of estates on the revenue-roll was 1,636, of which 1,550 were the result of the resumption proceedings of 1836-46. In 1888 the number had risen to 1,670, and in the last 20 years only 54 partitions have been effected in the Collectorate. The small extent to which

subdivision of proprietary interests has gone on may be realized from the fact that up to 31st March 1907 the total number of interests registered in the 1,712 revenue-paying estates was only 8,092.

Tenure-holders.

The following summary of the position of tenure-holders is extracted from the Settlement Report. Excluding Sūrjyapur, an area of 1,422,651 acres is leased out to permanent tenure-holders. Out of this, 906,158 acres are held on *patnī* leases; 248,933 acres are held at fixed rents, on leases other than *patnī* leases; and 267,560 acres are held by permanent tenure-holders [as defined in section 3(8) of the Bengal Tenancy Act], whose rents are not fixed. Thus, outside Sūrjyapur 1,155,091 acres are held by permanent tenure-holders on fixed rents. In Sūrjyapur, the Khagrā estate has leased out 140,080 acres at fixed rents, and the other share-holders 51,646 acres, also at fixed rents.

The area mortgaged to tenure-holders is only 1,343 acres, and the area leased temporarily on farming leases is 76,118 acres. These together amount to 3·2 per cent. of the total area, while the area held by permanent tenure-holders (including those whose rents are fixed as well as those whose rents are not fixed) amounts to 59·4 per cent. of the total area. Thus, in all, 62·6 per cent. of the total area is held by genuine tenure-holders who pay rent. In addition to this, 102,030 acres, *i.e.*, 4·2 per cent. of the total area, are held rent-free. Every rent-free holder who has sublet any part of his tenancy is classed as a tenure-holder; and as almost every one of them sublets some part of his tenancy, it may be taken that at least 4 per cent. of this rent-free area is held by tenure-holders. This would give 63·4 per cent. of the total area as held by permanent tenure-holders (including fixed rent and rent-free tenure-holders); and adding the 3·2 per cent. held by temporary tenure-holders, we get the percentage of the total area held by all sorts of tenure-holders as 66·6.

Tāluks.

Tāluks are not so numerous as in Bengal, and are all *shikmi*, *i.e.*, dependent. The absence of *huzūri* or independent *tāluks* is accounted for by the fact that, at the time of the Permanent Settlement, the *pargana* system had not been broken up, as had been the case, for instance, all over the Rājshāhi Division; and Government was able to make its assessments and settlements on the well-marked lines afforded by the *pargana* as a fiscal unit of landed property. The same reason is given for the absence of *taufir* or incremental estates. Although large tracts were unreclaimed, and, in fact, had not been assessed, they lay within recognized areas and the advantages of their cultivation went to the landholders.

Dependent *tāluks* are usually of the *istimrāri* species, *i.e.*, farms or leases granted by the landholder in perpetuity at a fixed stipulated rent, and often, in cases where the lessee was a relative, favourite, or old servant of the lessor, at a quit-rent. In this district they are of comparatively old origin. Some of the *istimrāri tāluks*, or *istimrārs* as they are called in Purnea, were granted by the Nawābs of Purnea; and several, it appears, were created or confirmed by a farmer of the district revenue, Achinta Rai, about 1771 shortly after the assumption by the Company of the management of the revenues. The *kānungos* of each *pargana* also usually held one or more *istimrārs* from the zamīndārs, *e.g.*, Gopikānta Rai, a Bengali of Kāntanagar near Kārāgolā, who was *kānungo* of Dharampur in 1790, held five or six *istimrārs*, while two or three more were acquired by Harichand Rai Lālā, a *kānungo* of Nāthpur and Garāri. *Istimrāri tāluks*

These tenures are most numerous in the *parganas* of Haveli, Dharampur, Fatehpur, Singhiā and Srīpur; and the following are some of the largest:—(1) *Tāluk* Vishnupur in *pargana* Haveli was granted to Agā Muhammad Alī Khān, the last Nawāb of Purnea, and grandfather of Agā Saifullā Khān, a leading Musalmān gentleman of the town of Purnea, on whose death about 20 years ago it passed to his niece Bībī Kamarunnissa Khānam, widow of Saiyad Razā Alī Khān Bahādur. From a copy of the *sanad* filed in the Collectorate, it would appear to have been granted by Achinta Rai, the farmer, but it is more probable that it was only confirmed by him. (2) *Tāluk* Gohoma, in *pargana* Haveli, held by Mr. Forbes of Sultānganj. (3) *Tāluks* Perwa and Ramai, in *pargana* Sultānpur.

Large *istimrāri* and *mukarari* tenures are common in the Kishanganj subdivision, and there are over 200 in the whole district. When an *istimrāri tāluk* is sublet in perpetuity, it is called, in Purnea, not a *dar-istmrāri*, but a *patnī taluk*. In fact, the word *patnī* seems to be loosely applied to any tenure created in perpetuity.

The *patnī* tenure was introduced into Purnea about the year 1838 by the zamīndārs of Jamūikāndi in Murshidābād, now known as the Paikpārā family, when their estate of Raghupur Rauniā in Dharampur was let out as a *patni tāluk*. This property formerly belonged to Rājā Madhu Sing of Darbhangā, but was sold for the recovery of arrears of revenue in 1790; and as sales were then held in Murshidābād, it came into the hands of its present owners. Subsequently, Bābu Pratāp Singh, one of the large landlords of the district, sublet his Purnea estates in *patni*, and in 1877 the number of *patnīs* had risen to 409. The number *Patnī tenures.*

has since largely increased owing to the existence of absentee landlords and their desire to raise large sums by creating such tenures. It is said that in the whole district there are now probably about 500 important *patnis* ; they are especially numerous in the Khagrā estate, where 138,593 acres are held on *patni* and *dar-patni* lease.

The incidents of the tenure are too well known to require detailed notice, but one peculiarity which formerly attached to it in Purnea may be noticed, viz., that arrears were realized by a civil suit, and not by the summary procedure prescribed by Regulation VIII of 1819, owing to an erroneous notion that the *patnī* law was not applicable to a purely Fasli *mahāl* or Bihār estate, such as Dharampur. This question was raised and submitted to the Board of Revenue for decision some 20 years ago. It was decided that *patnī* sales should, if necessary, be held at the beginning and middle of the Fasli year where that era prevails, *i.e.*, in *pargana* Dharampur. It would therefore appear that two sets of *patni* sales may be held by the Collector, one for the Bengali and the other for the Fasli portion of the district. The orders of the Board were based on a previous decision in a similar difficulty which arose in Orissa in 1840. From the Settlement Report it appears that this belief still lingers, for it is stated :—"An interesting, but apparently quite unfounded belief may be here noticed, viz., that *patnis* in the Fasli *Mahāls* cannot be sold up summarily under Regulation VIII of 1819 for arrears. However, very few *patnīs* are found in the western part of the district, where the Fasli *Mahāls* are found, so the question is not of much practical importance." In the last twenty years, 203 *patnis* have been sold up under the usual summary procedure, and these sales excite more interest than the ordinary revenue sales.

Darpatnīs are under-tenures created by a *patnīdār*, by which he transfers his own rights in the whole or part of his *tāluks*. A *darpatnī* is thus a *patnī* of the second degree, while a similar under-tenure created by a *darpatnīdār*, or a *patnī* of the third degree, is called a *sepatni*. The first *darpatnī* dates from 1854 and the first *sepatni* from 1871.

Nānkār tāluks. *Nānkār tāluks* are tracts of land originally exempted from assessment during the Mughal administration, being intended for the support of zamīndārs and their families. They were confined to *parganas* Srīpur and Sūrjyapur at the time of the Permanent Settlement, and according to the Quinquennial Register of 1798 were four in number. At present only one such estate appears on the Road Cess Registers, viz., *tāluk* Nawa Nānkār in the village of Pahasra.

Mustājiris are tenures held on contract by professed middlemen between the original landholder and the peasantry. They are equivalent to the *ijārās* of Bengal in all respects and are very common in Purnea. The usual period of such leases is five years, and the term *mutāhidi* is applied where a whole *pargana* in farmed out, and the lease is for a longer period, *e.g.*, 20 years or more. The evils of the system are well illustrated by the remarks of a former Collector of Purnea :—"Though the zamīndārs are moderate and liberal landlords, they are indirectly to blame for the worst feature that exists in the land system of this portion of the district, that of middlemen known as *mustājirs.* Nothing can be worse for the landlord and the cultivator than the system of five-yearly leases granted to *mustājirs*, as the *mustājir* offers a higher rent at each settlement, which he in turn recovers from the cultivators. The latter appear profoundly ignorant of their rights under the law, though, being a prosperous class, they are daily becoming more able to hold their own The *mustājir*, in addition to looting the ryots to the best of his ability by enhancing rents, in which process he is materially assisted by the disinclination of the tenants to have their holdings measured, and their accepting enhancements in preference to measurement, has one or two other resources. For instance, he has a habit of taking full advantage of his temporary lease for creating holdings in his own name. Land is plentiful, and he maps out for himself a fine holding at a nominal rent, which holding survives his temporary lease. Then, he has an amiable way of ousting his landlord by the creation of *miliks* or rent-free holdings by a well-recognized process, which is known as converting *māl* or rent-paying land into *milik* or rent-free. The *mustājir*, being generally selected by the landlord from among the most clever and influential men, or briefly, a man whom the other tenants fear, is specially qualified not only to coerce his neighbours into paying rent, but also to turn the tables on his employer, and use his authority to make the tenants of his master acknowledge the *mustājir* as their landlord by right of an imaginary *milik*, or rent-free holding, which he invents, and the rents of which he collects as *milikdār.* This *milik* remains in his possession for ever : a few civil suits, often collusively carried out between the *mustājir* as *milikdār* and the ryots whose lands he is transferring rent-free to himself, provide the unjust steward with documentary evidence of title, which it is difficult for the zamīndār subsequently to upset. By this means many men of humble origin and little or no education have succeeded in creating for themselves very comfortable little properties."*

Mustājiris and mutāhidis.

* *Cameos of Indian Districts (Purnea)*, Calcutta Review, 1889.

This account has been confirmed by the experience gained in the course of the recent settlement. "The local influence of the middlemen," writes Mr. Byrne, "grows with their wealth, and when a *tāluka* has been given over to their tender mercies for a few years, it becomes impossible for the *māliks* to realize anything except through the middlemen. No outsider dares take settlement of the *tāluka*. If the *māliks* attempt to make direct collections, they meet at once with an insurmountable obstacle, inasmuch as they have no papers at all on which to sue. The local middleman knows enough about the law to render it extremely dangerous for the *mālik* to try the moral effect of the persuasive powers of a swarm of peons with thick *lāthis* on recalcitrant ryots. The *māliks* are now practically obliged to make settlements with local middlemen of influence; and, furthermore, they are also employed as *tahsīldārs* for areas which they do not hold on leases. The *mālik* has no interest in the welfare of his tenants; he accepts what the *tahsīldārs* pay him in, and he asks no questions about what they do in the villages As usual, most of the *tahsīldār's* profits come from *abwābs*, which the tenants pay up readily enough, provided their annual rent is not interfered with. Uncertainty in that demand is the one thing which tenants dread most."

Gach-bandi. *Gachbandi* is the name of a tenure which is very commonly met with in *pargana* Sūrjyapur, and almost nowhere else. It was in force there before the time of the Permanent Settlement, and is believed to owe its origin to the reclamation of jungle lands taken from the Nepālis about the middle of the 18th century. The term implies a system of letting out blocks of land contained within certain boundaries for a lump sum without measuring their area or fixing any rate of rent. The land thus farmed out is called a *gach*, and its holder a *gachdār*. It may constitute a tenure or a cultivator's holding, but generally the former. A *gachdār* who does not cultivate the whole of it himself sublets a portion to cultivators or to *kulaitdārs*. The existing tenures of this kind are ancient ones, which have passed down from father to son. They are now no longer created, being clearly the outcome of a state of things in which land was so plentiful, that precision in assessing rent was not necessary.

In the course of the recent settlement it has generally been found that *gachdārs* are tenure-holders; but in certain areas, where the lands are very fertile, the *gachdārs* are undistinguishable from ordinary occupancy ryots. They hold only very small areas of two or three acres, and if any part is sublet, it is only a small plot on which a ploughman

or other servant is allowed to build a house. The operation of the Muhammadan law of inheritance has no doubt accelerated this minute subdivision, which is most noticeable in the villages near the Dinājpur border, about 10 miles due east from Kishanganj. Even where *gachdārs* have thus in process of time become undistinguishable from occupancy ryots, they can still express their share in the entire *gach* in annas, *gandās*, etc. It has also been frequently found that a small residue of the lands of a *gach* remains undivided. This is usually known as the *shamilat* area, and frequently consists of a graveyard, a jute-steeping tank, or a patch of unculturable land.

Resumed *jāgirs.*

Resumed *jagīr* lands are only found in the *parganas* situated along the Nepāl frontier, viz., Srīpur, Fatehpur Singhiā and Sultānpur. They were originally rent-free and were given for the performance of certain services, such as the prevention of the incursions of wild elephants, pigs, and tigers, coming from the Morang or Tarai, upon the cultivated lands of the district. They were mostly held by people of the Rājbansi caste, who were called *sardārs.* When the service for which the lands were granted was no longer required, the holdings were assessed to rent. In many cases they have been alienated by the descendants of the original grantees. The largest of these *jāgīrs* is Jāgīr Phāku in *pargana* Haveli, held by Mr. Forbes and others, which pays a revenue of Rs. 1,178. A considerable *jāgir* was also attached to *tāluk* Ramāi, in pargana Sultānpur, called *tāluk* Piprā, and was conferred on one Mīr Saiyad Alī, a native of Gulastān in Persia, in consideration of his keeping up a body of men for guarding the northern frontier.

Ryoti holdings.

The position of tenants with ryoti holdings in Purnea is summarized by Mr. Byrne as follows:—"The number of ryoti holdings whose owners have the rights of ryots at fixed rents, of settled ryots and of occupancy ryots amounts to 455,410, and the area held by them to 1,656,205 acres. This is equivalent to almost exactly 73·5 per cent. of the total occupied area. This is a smaller percentage than is usual in the North Bihār districts, but it will be borne in mind that the permanent tenure-holders in Purnea occupy a very large area that would in other districts probably be held by ryots, that their position is most secure, that the population is comparatively sparse, and that a considerable culturable area is still uncultivated." The terms usually applied to holdings of ryots at fixed rents are *mukarari jot*, *maurusi jot* and *kāsht;* while occupancy holdings are known as *jot jamā*. The following is an account of some special forms of tenancies.

Hal-hāsilā jot.

Halhāsilā jot is a species of tenure prevailing on the banks of the Kosi and the Ganges, but unknown in other parts of the district. Its peculiarity is that the rent is determined every year by measurement of the area actually cultivated, and the assessment of a rate fixed in accordance with the area and the nature of the crop according to the rates (called *lerā*) recognized for each crop. The measurement is made after the crop is reaped, and is generally carried on from the month of January (Māgh) to March (Chait) by an *āmīn* or surveyor on behalf of the landlord, and the village *patwāri*, in the presence of the cultivator. If the landlord fails to measure the lands after the crops have been cut, and to ascertain the rent according to the nature of the crop grown on each plot, he can recover only as much rent as he got in the previous year. If he neglects to measure the land for a number of years, he can claim only the rent of the year in which the lands were last measured. The rent of each holding is fluctuating, and increases or decreases every year according to the area cultivated. If a tenant holds 30 acres and cultivates only 20, allowing the rest to remain fallow, he pays rent for the cultivated 20 acres according to the crop sown on them, the fallow land being unassessed. If the whole 30 acres are left fallow, he cannot let the lands to another. Under this system the zamīndār is at the mercy of the ryot, who may cultivate as much or as little of his *jot* as he likes and pay accordingly. It requires the zamīndār to keep up a large establishment to measure the land every year, in order to ascertain what crops are grown, and to assess rent accordingly. It is said to give rise to much dishonesty on the part of subordinates, and to be a most unsatisfactory and difficult system to work. The holders are usually members of the higher Hindu castes or Musalmāns.

These tenures are believed to be of old origin. The letters of the Collector to the Board of Revenue, before the period of the Permanent Settlement, show that the original cultivator's tenure in Dharampur was *bhāoli*, that is to say, rent was paid in kind, half the produce generally going to the zamīndār. Rent in kind was then being gradually altered into a money rent by the zamīndāri *āmlā* or agents in collusion with the ryots, and it is said that it was about this time that the *halhāsilā* system came into existence. Now-a-days, on the banks of the Ganges and the Kosi, numbers of non-resident ryots, known as *dohatwārs*, principally from Bhāgalpur district, take *halhāsilā jots* as yearly tenants; in such cases the holdings, owing to the changes in the course of the river, are not the same from year to year.

A somewhat similar tenure is that called *birāwāri*, a word derived from *birā*, literally meaning a stalk or bundle of stalks, which is given the more extended meaning of produce. It implies a system under which rent is paid according to the nature of the crop grown in different parts of holdings, *e.g.*, whether it is rice, tobacco, etc. The main difference between the *birāwāri* and *halhāsilā* systems is that under the former every plot of land is assessed at some rate, whereas under the latter only the lands that actually bear a crop are assessed to rent. ***Birāwāri.***

Another tenure met with in the Dharampur *pargana* is that called *jot jamā*, under which the ryot selects whatever land he likes for cultivation up to the total area entered in his agreement but only within the limits of a certain specified village. The origin of the system is easily explained. The river Kosi, after covering large tracts of land with sand, and rendering them uninhabitable and uncultivable, takes some new direction, and in course of years this land again becomes fit for occupation. The villagers then return, and break up patches here and there, their rent being assessed according to the nature and extent of their cultivation. It is necessary to assess at low rates, in order to attract cultivators. In course of time these disconnected patches become well-defined *jots*, and are entered in the village books against the names of the cultivators. As the land is reclaimed from jungle and cultivation advances, the villages adopt the *halhāsilā* system instead of the *jot jamā*. On the other hand, if the villages are again devastated by the Kosi and relapse into jungle, the *halhāsilā* system gives way to the *jot jamā*. ***Jot jamā.***

There are one or two other similar systems of collections, which are rare, and appertain either to single villages or individual cases. One is called *harbera*, *i.e.*, a different rate is charged for the same piece of land according to the crop grown thereon. It seems the same as the *birāwāri* tenancy under cultivation. A second is known as *mushakhas*, and is equivalent to an ordinary lease of an uncertain quantity of land at a fixed quit-rent, payable whether all or any part of the land is cultivated or not. ***Harbera* and *mushakhas.***

The statistics compiled during the recent settlement show that number of tenancies held by under-ryots is 98,739, of which 59,202 were found to have occupancy rights attaching to them by custom, and the remainder (39,537) have not this incident. The total area held by under-ryots is 107,233 acres, or 6 per cent. of the total ryoti area. Altogether 61,544 acres are held on cash rent, the occupants having occupancy rights in respect of 44,291 acres. The balance (34,946 acres) is held **Under-ryots' holdings.**

on produce rents, out of which the occupants have by custom occupancy rights in respect of 17,253 acres. The tenant who pays rent in kind is thus recognized as having a somewhat better position in this district than he usually has elsewhere.

"The comparison of the total number of tenancies held by under-ryots with the total of ryoti holdings is," writes Mr. Byrne, "interesting. The former figure represents 21·7 per cent. of the latter, yet the area held by under-ryots is only 6 per cent. of the total ryoti area. The explanation of this is that most under-ryots are so only in respect of small plots for house sites and homesteads. House sites are at a premium in this district owing to its liability to inundation, and this is reflected in the average rate paid per acre by under-ryots, which reaches the abnormal figure of Rs. 10-2-5 in Islāmpur thāna. The fact that most of the area held by under-ryots is homestead land, also helps to explain the growth of the custom by which they are recognized as having occupancy rights. No one will build a house unless he is morally certain that he has a better status than that of a mere tenant-at-will in the lands on which he proposes to build."

Kulaitdārs. An under-ryot's holding is commonly called *kulaiti* and he himself a *kulaitdār*. When held on payment of produce rent, it is divided into three kinds according to the manner of payment of rent—(1) *Bhāoli*, in which a certain fixed amount of produce is stipulated to be paid as rent, regardless of the actual outturn, *i.e.*, it is recoverable even should the crop fail; (2) *Adhiā*, in which half the produce, ascertained by weighment after reaping, is taken as rent; and (3) *Kutbandi*, in which the produce of the standing crop is estimated and half of the estimated outturn handed over in lieu of rent.

Rent-free lands. In the Sūrjyapur *pargana* the total area held rent-free by tenure-holders is 30,150 acres, and in the rest of the district the area so held under valid titles is 102,030 acres, *i.e.*, nearly 3·6 per cent. of the total area.

Miliks. The most common rent-free property is that called *milik*, a term which is in ordinary language supplanting all other names for rent-free holdings in Purnea. Theoretically the tenure dates back to a period anterior to the Permanent Settlement, and originated in grants given for religious and charitable purposes, or as a reward for services rendered, or as remuneration of services to be rendered. Such grants, when duly established before the British revenue authorities, at or subsequent to the Permanent Settlement, were not assessed to land revenue. In some cases they were entered as *lākhirāj* or revenue-free estates in the Collectorate records; in others they remained rent-free tenures embraced in a revenue-free

estate, but excluded from the assets of the estate for the purpose of estimating the land revenue to be paid by such estate. When resumption proceedings were instituted, a great number of invalid revenue-free tenures were brought under assessment on favourable terms, the revenue being half of what would have been assessed but for the fact that the holders had enjoyed exemption from revenue for a long period. Such is the theoretical origin of all such tenures, and such is no doubt the real origin of some of them.

In practice, however, many unwarranted claims to hold land rent-free have been made. The large uncultivated area existing in some estates has facilitated such pretensions and rendered them, when made, difficult of disproof in the courts of law. The landlord himself and his superior servants may remain in ignorance of the fact that land has been occupied in some remote and previously uncultivated part of his property, and this ignorance may continue for a period sufficiently long to justify a Judge in recognizing the right to have accrued by user. The Civil Courts thus become the means of establishing claims that are fraudulent at the outset. When, as is often the case, the paid servants of the zamīndār, the *patwāris* and others, are the chief offenders in this respect, it is easy to see how injuriously the landlord can be defrauded by the creation of fictitious *miliks*. The remarks on the subject of such *miliks* given in the paragraph on *mustājiris* may also be referred to.

Jāgirs.

In the early part of last century, owing to the inroads of marauders along the Nepāl frontier, certain areas were assigned as service tenures to men who undertook the policing of the frontier. In the course of time, the need for these wardens of the border ceased to be so urgent, but the lands were not surrendered. They are still locally known as *jāgirs*, and at present many of them are held not rent-free, but on payment of a nominal quit-rent, or *nazarāna* as it is called. In the course of the recent settlement a detailed enquiry into these tenures was made, and it was concluded that in many cases attempts had been made formerly by the landlords, within whose spheres of influence they lay, to assess them to rent. A compromise would seem to have been arrived at, and a fixed amount averaging about 4 annas per acre was paid under the denomination of *nazarāna*. In the settlement record these men have been recorded as holding rent-free, but subject to the payment of a fixed *nazarāna*.

In some parts of the extreme north-east of Islāmpur thāna between the river Mahānandā and the Nepāl border, a system of

sardārs and *paiks* still survives in name. They pay about 4 annas per acre as *nazarāna*, but they render no service of any sort. The *sardārs* are responsible for the payment of the *nazarāna*, but they make no profit on their collections from the *paiks*. The area held under these conditions is inconsiderable. This system is found also in thānas Gopālpur and Kadwā. All these holders of service tenures have been treated as actually holding, and as entitled to hold, rent-free, subject to the payment of a fixed nominal *nazarāna*, which is not a true agricultural rent.

Service holdings.

Grants for services rendered to the landlord are sometimes met with, *e.g.*, small plots of land held by *goraits*. Village artisans are also occasionally remunerated by such holdings, but they are few and unimportant. They are held by Mālis, who provide artificial flowers cut out of pith during the Muharram, the village barbers, washermen and potters, and the professional drummers, whose services are in request for religious ceremonies and festive occasions.

Other rent-free holdings.

A number of rent-free holdings were formerly made by great landlords for religious or charitable purposes, and are still frequently created. The most common of such tenures are those known as (1) *debottar*, *i.e.*, religious endowments, intended for the maintenance of temples and the celebration of rites and ceremonies, as well as the support of officiating priests, and (2) *brahmottar*, or grants made for the support of Brāhmans as such without regard to the performance of religious ceremonies. Under the head of *debottar* may be classed endowments especially allotted to the service of particular manifestations of the deity, such as *sivattor*, *vishnuvattor*, *kālīpūjā* for the special service of Siva, Vishnu and Kālī. Religious grants made by Muhammadans are known as *wakf*, varieties of which are *pirottar*, or foundations for the support of *pirs* or saints; *madadmāsh*, or grants for the support of pious or learned Muhammadars; and *imāmbāra*, intended for the maintenance of a house of prayer and the celebration of ceremonies in connection with the Muharram. The only endowment of this kind calling for special notice is Mirza Muhammad Husain's Endowment, in which the Collector is trustee of certain estates, the rents of which are applied to the support of school, a *sarai* or guest-house and an Imāmbāra. Both in the case of Hindu and Muhammadan endowments, the original purpose has, in some instances, been lost sight of, and the proceeds are applied, as elsewhere, to the private expenses of the trustees.

Among miscellaneous tenures the following may be mentioned briefly. *Golāganj jamā* means rent paid for land used for *golās* or warehouses. *Hāt jamā* is the rent paid by the lessee of a *hāt* or market place. Leases of pasture land for grazing cattle are common. They are of two kinds—*kashchari* lands, *i.e.*, lands which grow the long thatching grass called *kash*; and *rāmnās*, which grow the excellent fodder grass called *dub*, as well as thatching grass, and short coarse grasses called *tilwa*, *madhua* and *birna*. There are a number of rent-paying incorporeal rights which may be most fitly described here, although they cannot be accurately defined as tenures. *Jalkar* requires no special notice, being simply a lease of fishery rights. The holder of a *jalkar*, when he is of low caste, is called a *mahāldār*. *Ghāt jamā* is the rent paid by a ferry farmer. *Bankar*, *phalkar* and *jamā shahd* are rents paid for the exercise of forest rights in firewood, fruit and honey respectively. *Jamā singhati* is a market due paid to the owner or farmer of a market for registering sales of cattle as a safeguard against the sale of stolen animals at markets. *Jamā chutki* is another market due (nominally a handful of the wares exposed for sale) given to the owner or farmer by each vendor. *Kayāli jamā* is the fee paid by the professional weighman of a market for the right to weigh goods on behalf of purchasers in the market. The *kayāl* in his turn levies a fee equivalent to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the amount weighed. **Miscellaneous tenures.**

When the Permanent Settlement was effected, the district was divided as follows amongst the chief landholders:—(1) Rānī Indrabatī of Mohinī near Kasbā, the daughter of Madhu Singh, Rājā of Darbhangā, was the greatest landholder of the district, holding *parganas* Sultānpur, Srīpur, Fatehpur Singhiā, Haveli, Katihār, Kumāripur, Garāri and Nāthpur (the last of which has since been transferred to Bhāgalpur). (2) Rājā Madhu Singh of Darbhangā was zamīndār of Dharampur, which occupied an area of about 1,000 square miles, or one-fifth of the whole district. (3) Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain, the ancestor of the Khagrā zamīndārs, held *pargana* Sūrjyapur, which is 729 square miles in area. (4) Bakaullā was zamīndār of Badaur with an area of 284 square miles. (5) Sibnāth and Gaurī Nāth were joint-proprietors of Tājpur, which is 197 square miles in area. (6) Dular Singh, who became one of the largest landholders in the district, was the zamīndār of Tirakhardā, which has an area of only 75 square miles. The assessment seems not to have exceeded the capabilities of the estates, as most of the larger ones have not changed hands, but still continue in the possession of the descendants of those with whom the settlement was made. **LANDLORDS OF THE DISTRICT.**

The only large properties that have been broken up are those of Ránī Indrabatī, which had an area of 2,000 square miles, and the Sūrjyapur *pargana*. As regards the former, in 1850, Bābu Pratāp Singh, father of Rai Lakshmīpat Singh and Rai Dhanpat Singh of Murshidābād, purchased the whole of *parganas* Haveli Purnea and Sultānpur, and about three-fourths of *parganas* Fatehpur Singhiā, Srīpur, Katihār and Kumāripur. The late Mr. Palmer of Purnea acquired the remainder of the four *parganas* last named, and Rājā Lilanand Singh of the Banaili Rāj purchased Garāri. Bābu Pratāp Singh subsequently (in 1859) sold Sultānpur to Mr. A. J. Forbes, the father of the present proprietors, and *pargana* Haveli Purnea to Bābu Dharam Chānd Lāl, a banker of Purnea. As regards the latter, it was divided on the death of Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain between his two sons Didar Husain and Akbar Husain. The descendants of the former, who are known as the Khagrā branch of the family, are still in possession of their share, but a number of *patnīs* were given out by the late Nawāb Saiyad Husain. Akbar Husain died childless, and his widow transferred the property to her brother, whose descendants (known as the Kishanganj branch of the family) have lost it, different shares being acquired by Nawāb Lutf Alī Khān of Patna, Bābu Dharam Chānd Lāl and his son Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl.

A portion of the district is owned by families of European descent. Prominent among these are the heirs of Alexander J. Forbes, who acquired *pargana* Sultānpur and other properties, and the descendants of Mr. Palmer, who acquired much landed property as a *mustājir* or farmer, and as a zamīndār in *pargana* Srīpur. He left one daughter, who married a Mr. Downing, on whose death the property was divided between his son, Mr. Clifford Young Downing, and his daughter, the wife of Mr. Hayes, formerly a Deputy Magistrate in this district.

Of Muhammadan landed families, the most important are the zamīndārs of Sūrjyapur, of which there are two branches—the Khagrā branch, represented by the widow and sons of Nawāb Saiyad Atā Husain, and the Kishanganj branch, represented by Saiyad Dilawar Razā. Both families claim to be descended originally from the Khagrā stock, but the Kishanganj branch possessed no interest in the estate till united to the house of Khagrā by marriage three generations back. The difficulty as to so ancient a family being in humble circumstances till this alliance is explained by a tradition that at some remote period their ancestor, the elder brother of the Khagrā family at that time, abdicated in favour of

his younger brother, from whom the present Khagrā zamīndārs trace their descent ; but the story is emphatically denied by the Khagrā family. According to their account, at the beginning of the 19th century the Sūrjyapur property was owned in equal shares by two brothers Saiyad Akbar Husain and Saiyad Didar Husain. Didar, who remained at Khagrā, was the grandfather of Nawāb Saiyad Atā Husain of Khagrā. Akbar removed from Khagrā to Kishanganj, marrying Bībī Zahūrunnissa, the daughter of a petty *milikdār* of Alīganj in this district. He died childless, and his widow succeeded to the property, which she left to her brother Husain Razā, whose grandsons were Saiyad Asghar Khān Bahādur and Saiyad Dilāwar Razā.

Another family of some antiquity is that of the late Agā Saifullā Khān, who was the son of Ahmed Alī Khān and the grandson of Muhammad Alī Khān, the last of the Nawābs of Purnea. On his death the property passed to his niece, Bībī Kamarannissa, widow of Saiyad Razā Alī Khān Bahādur, a native of the Muzaffarnagar district in the United Provinces. The property of Bībī Kamarannissa was increased by a 4 annas 8 *gandās* share of *pargana* Badaur being given to her by Hafizunnissa, a member of the Beni Rasulpur family which formerly owned that *pargana* ; on the other hand, she made over a portion of the original estate to Saiyad Asad Razā, a son of her husband by another wife.

Among the principal Hindu zamīndārs is the Mahārājā of Darbhangā, to whom the Dharampur *pargana* has descended from Rājā Madhu Singh. Other important properties are those known as the Banaili and Srīnagar estates, which were originally owned by Dular Singh, the zamīndār of the sixth estate above mentioned. He had two sons Bidyānand Singh and Rudranand Singh, from the former of whom descended the Banaili branch, while the Srīnagar branch sprang from Rudranand. The property of both these families is situated in Bhāgalpur, Monghyr, Mālda and the Santāl Parganas, as well as in this district ; but their homes are at Banaili Srīnagar, Champānagar and Rāmnagar, adjacent villages about 13 miles north-west of the town of Purnea. The Banaili estate is now managed by Kālānand Singh and Krityānand Singh, sons of Rājā Lilānand Singh Bahādur by Rānī Sītābatī of Khuskāhpur. Another old family is that of Lakhrāj Rai, zamīndār of Chak Dilawarī, who was esteemed the wealthiest man in the district. He removed his home to Bihār in the Patna district, and his son Sukhrāj Rai, inherited his property. The Maldwar estate belonged to another absentee landlord, Bābu Budhināth Chaudhuri of Rāmganj in the Dinājpur district, on whose death

it was managed by the Court of Wards during the minority of his heirs.

Among families owning landed property whose wealth was primarily derived from commerce are those of Pratāp Singh, a banker of Purnea, and Nakched Lāl, another banker of Purnea. Pratāp Singh, as already mentioned, acquired an extensive property in 1850, but subsequently sold *parganas* Sultānpur and Haveli Purnea. He left two sons Dhanpat Singh and Lachmīpat Singh. The estate of the former (in *pargana* Srīpur) was sold for arrears of revenue in 1896 and was purchased by or for his wife Rānī Mina Kumāri. She has, however, little of it in *khās* possession, as it contains a number of *patnis*. Lachmīpat Singh's son, Bābu Chattarpat Singh, had various properties of very considerable extent, but he has lost some of them. He inherited from Bābu Pratāp Singh half of *pargana* Fatehpur Singhiā, but sold it to Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore of Calcutta. The rest of it is held by Mr. C. Y. Downing and Mrs. Hayes, the heirs of Mr. Palmer and his wife, who bought it jointly with Bābu Pratāp Singh. Bābu Chattarpat Singh also sold in 1904 *pargana* Kumāripur to one Bijay Singh of Murshidābād. The son of Nackched Lāl, Bābu Dharam Chānd Lāl, steadily added to the property acquired by his father. He purchased Haveli Purnea from Bābu Pratāp Singh, and it now stands in the name of his wife, Musamāt Bhagwānbatī Chaudhrain of Purnea. She and her son, Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl Chaudhri, are now said to be the wealthiest resident zamīndārs of the Purnea district. They have acquired this Haveli property, *pargana* Asja (Tauji No. 29), about 5¾ annas of *pargana* Sūrjyapur, and 4 annas of *pargana* Powākhāli, besides smaller properties and *patnis*.

LANDLORDS' STAFF.

The staff of landlords in this district is much the same as in other Bihār districts. The *tahsildār* is the rent-collector and general manager for a circle of villagers, and is sometimes assisted by a *nāib tahsildār*. He has under him a number of subordinates, called *srimans* and, in parts of the Srīnagar estate, *mukaddams*, who collect the rents from the villagers. This duty is sometimes also discharged by the *patwāri* or village accountant. The *taināth*, *gorait* and *paik* are messengers employed by the village rent-collector to summon the ryots to pay rent or account for non-payment. The *mandal* or *jeth-raiyat* is the village headman, who is sometimes allowed to hold land at a lower rate of rent than other cultivators, on the understanding that he uses his influence with the latter in the interests of the landlord.

The following is a list of the *parganas* in Purnea with their areas as dealt with in Mr. Byrne's settlement and previous settlements, viz., those of Banaili and Maldwar:— *Parganas.*

Name.	Area in square miles.	Name.	Area in square miles
Akbarpur	17	Kadwā	139·17
Asja	127	Kānkjol	148
Badaur	284	Katibār	95
Bhakhi	1·50	Kharwa	·35
Bhaur	·03	Kholra	9
Burhi Gangal	17	Kumāripur	65
Chak Dilāwar	·38	Mahinagar	·20
Chhal	2	Maldwar	23
Debat	16	Matsari	2
Dehinagar	1	Nāthpur	2
Dhaphar	11	Pawākhāli	126
Dharampur	964·05	Rājnagar	·11
Dilāwarpur ...	9	Shāhpur	8
Fatehpur Singhiā ...	225	Sānjanagar	17
Gārari	...	Sripur	411·28
Garhi	4	Sultānpur	192
Garho or Garhonda ...	·35	Surjyapur	729
Harwat	36	Tājpur	196·63
Hathinda	19	Tappa Lakhpura ...	·15
Haveli	787	Tirakhardā	75

CHAPTER XII.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHARGES AND STAFF. FOR administrative purposes the district is divided into three subdivisions, *viz.*, Purnea, Kishanganj and Arāriā, with an area of 2,571, 1,346 and 1,077 square miles, respectively. The Purnea or head-quarters (Sadar) subdivision is under the direct supervision of the Collector, while each of the other two subdivisions is in charge of a Subdivisional Officer. At Purnea the sanctioned staff, in addition to the Collector, consists of 4 Deputy Collectors, and besides this regular staff, there is a Deputy Collector in charge of Excise and Income-tax. The Subdivisional Officers at Arāriā and Kishanganj are also usually each assisted by a Sub-Deputy Collector.

REVENUE. The revenue of the district under the main heads rose from Rs. 17,89,000 in 1880-81 (when the income-tax had not been imposed) to Rs. 20,30,000 in 1890-91, and to Rs. 20,93,000 in 1900-01. In 1908-09 it amounted to Rs. 24,33,000, of which Rs. 11,74,000 were derived from land revenue, Rs. 5,31,000 from excise, Rs. 4,22,000 from stamps, Rs. 2,19,000 from cesses and Rs. 87,000 from income-tax.

Land revenue. The collections of land revenue aggregated Rs. 11,70,000 in 1880-81, Rs. 12,60,000 in 1890-91, and Rs. 11,69,000 in 1900-01. They rose to Rs. 11,74,000 in 1908-09, when they accounted for nearly 48 per cent. of the total revenue of the district. The current demand in the year last mentioned was Rs. 11,80,000 payable by 1,707 estates, Rs. 11,73,000 being due from 1,659 permanently-settled estates, Rs. 2,000 from 37 temporarily-settled estates and Rs. 5,000 from 11 estates held direct by Government. The total land revenue demand is equal approximately to one-fourth of the gross rental of the district.

Excise. The excise revenue increased from Rs. 2,70,000 in 1892-93 to Rs. 3,79,000 in 1900-01. Since that year there has been a

steady growth in the receipts, and in 1908-09 they amounted to Rs. 5,31,000, a total higher than for any other district in the Division except Monghyr, the net excise revenue being Rs. 2,751 per 10,000 of the population (or nearly 4 annas a head), as compared with the Provincial average of Rs. 3,191 per 10,000.

The greater portion of the excise revenue is derived from the sale of country spirit prepared by distillation from the flower of the *mahuā* tree (*Bassia latifolia*). The receipts from this source amounted in 1908-09 to Rs. 2,01,000, or nearly 38 per cent. of the total excise revenue. The manufacture and sale of country spirit have hitherto been carried on under what is known as the outstill system. Under this system there were (in 1908-09) 102 shops for the retail sale of outstill liquor, *i.e.*, one retail shop for the sale of country spirit to every 18,380 persons; the total consumption of the liquor was 55,953 proof gallons, *i.e.*, 29 proof gallons per 1,000 of the population, the incidence of taxation being anna 1-10 per head of the population. This system has been replaced from the 1st April 1909 by what is known as the contract supply system, which has been introduced in some other districts in Bengal. The main features of this latter system are briefly as follows. The local manufacture of country spirit is prohibited, and a contract is made with some large distillery for its supply. The spirit is brought from the distillery to the various depôts, and is thence issued to retail vendors and sold by the latter to consumers at certain fixed strengths. The consumption of the fermented liquor known as *tāri* is inconsiderable, its sale bringing in only Rs. 14,000 in 1908-09. The receipts from country spirit and *tāri* represented an expenditure of Rs. 1,272 per 10,000 of the population.

The receipts from hemp drugs and opium account for practically all the remainder of the excise revenue. The greater part (Rs. 2,07,576 in 1908-09) is derived from the duty and license fees levied on *gānja*, *i.e.*, the dried flowering tops of the cultivated female hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa*) and the resinous exudation on them. The consumption of hemp drugs is, in fact, unusually great, the expenditure being Rs. 1,107 per 10,000 of the population, as compared with the average of Rs. 848 for the Division and of Rs. 581 for the whole of Bengal. Opium is also more extensively consumed than in any other district of the Division. In 1908-09 the duty and license fees on this drug brought in Rs. 84,436, and the incidence of expenditure was Rs. 450 per 10,000 of the population, as compared with the Divisional

average of Rs. 195 and the Provincial average of Rs. 536 per 10,000.

Stamps. The revenue from stamps ranks next in importance as a source of income to that derived from excise. The receipts from this source increased from Rs. 2,77,000 in 1897-98 to Rs. 4,22,000 in 1908-09, or by 52 per cent., the increase being mainly due to the growing demand for judicial stamps, which brought in Rs. 3,35,000 as against Rs. 2,12,000 in 1897-98. The sale of court-fee stamps is by far the most important item in the receipts from judicial stamps, realizing Rs. 3,04,000 in 1908-09 as compared with Rs. 1,97,441 in 1897-98. The revenue derived from non-judicial stamps rose during the same period from Rs. 65,000 to Rs. 87,000, of which impressed stamps accounted for Rs. 83,000.

Cesses. Road and public works cesses are, as usual, levied at the maximum rate of one anna in the rupee. The current demand in 1908-09 was Rs. 2,33,534, the greater part of which (Rs. 2,18,494) was payable by 2,663 revenue-paying estates, while Rs. 3,782 were due from 532 revenue-free estates and Rs. 11,258 from 1,812 rent-free properties. The number of tenures assessed to cesses was 66,808, while the number of recorded shareholders of estates and tenures was 10,038 and 67,474 respectively. These cesses were first levied in 1872, and the gross valuation was then Rs. 28,59,695. In 1902 it was Rs. 35,30,747, and in 1908 it was Rs. 43,83,196. This last figure included Rs. 58,413, the valuation of lands held, or alleged to be held, free of rent, and the area now attested as rent-free is 128,841 acres.

Income-tax. In 1900-01 the income-tax yielded altogether Rs. 67,910 paid by 3,273 assessees, of whom 2,384 paying Rs. 25,534 had incomes over Rs 500 but below Rs. 1,000. At that time the minimum assessable income was Rs. 500, but this was raised in 1903, by the Income-tax Amendment Act of that year, to Rs. 1,000 per annum, thereby affording relief to a number of petty traders, money-lenders and clerks. The number of assessees consequently fell in 1903-04 to 920, the net collections being Rs. 57,623. In 1908-09 the amount collected was Rs. 87,521 paid by 1,197 assessees. The realizations are mainly on account of grain and money-lending and trade, chiefly in grain and piece-goods.

Registration. There are 5 offices for the registration of assurances under Act III of 1877. At the headquarters station (Purnea) the District Sub-Registrar deals, as usual, with the documents presented there, and assists the District Magistrate, who is *ex-officio* District Registrar, in supervising the proceedings of the Sub-Registrars who are in charge of the other registration offices. The average number

of documents registered annually during the quinquennium ending in 1904 was 16,713 as against 17,281 in the preceding five years, there being a slight decrease of 3 per cent. The marginal statement shows the number of documents registered and the receipts and expenditure at each office in 1908.

NAME.	Documents registered.	Receipts.	Expenditure.
		Rs.	Rs.
Purnea	6,430	10,427	4,733
Arāriā	5,775	6,384	3,504
Kāliāganj	2,675	3,831	2,149
Kishanganj	2,927	4,496	2,777
Do. joint (Bahādurganj).	2,838	4,217	2,642
TOTAL ...	20,645	29,355	15,805

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. Civil justice.

The civil courts are those of the District and Sessions Judge, who is also the District and Sessions Judge of Darjeeling, of a Sub-Judge, who holds his court at Purnea, and of five Munsifs, of whom two are stationed at Kishanganj and one each at Purnea, Katihār and Arāriā.

Criminal justice.

Criminal justice is administered by the District and Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate and the Magistrates subordinate to him. The sanctioned staff at Purnea consists, in addition to the District Magistrate, of three Deputy Magistrates of the first class, and one Deputy Magistrate of the second or third class. Besides these officers, one or two Sub-Deputy Magistrates exercising second or third class powers are sometimes posted there. The Subdivisional Officers at Arāriā and Kishanganj are almost invariably officers vested with first class powers, and the Sub-Deputy Magistrates under them have second or third class powers. There are also Benches of Honorary Magistrates at Purnea, Arāriā, Katihār and Kishanganj.

Crime.

Regarding the nature of the crime committed in the district the following remarks recorded, in 1897, by a former Commissioner of the Division may be quoted:—"Purnea is not a criminal district but a lawless one, and keeps to the traditions of its border forays and affrays. Hostile zamīndārs are still found attacking each other in force with elephants, horses and arms, and there were two such cases last year. The dacoits are real banditti. A few weeks ago a band of them, 20 or 25 strong, occupied the Mārwāri bazar of Kishanganj close to the railway station and three miles from the Subdivisional Magistrate's court, and held it with sword and pistol, while others of these brigands attempted to loot it." The most characteristic crime of the district is still dacoity, the prevalence of which is attributed to the apathy of the people,

the proximity of the Nepāl Tarai, in which bad characters easily find refuge, and the fact that the greater portion of the district is sparsely inhabited.

The frequency of dacoities in recent years will be apparent from a report submitted by the District Magistrate in 1905:—"During 1895 to 1899 there were 77 dacoities reported, whereas during 1900 to 1904 there were 151 such cases brought to light. At the same time, it must be noted that there was a very sudden increase in crime of this nature in 1900, 1901 and 1902, owing to indigo rows between the ryots of Dharampur *pargana* and the Darbhangā Rāj, which had purchased the old Gondwārā concern from the proprietors, Thomas and Company of Calcutta. As far as I can understand, the cause of this outbreak was that the ryots were told that, if they paid enhanced rents, indigo would be stopped. This they were willing to do, and did; but subsequently the Rāj decided to continue indigo cultivation, and this the ryots objected to, and rose up in arms against the Rāj and committed serious depredations, dacoities, riots, arson cases, and even murder to gain their end, *i.e.*, not to sow indigo. During this period most stringent measures had to be taken by Government, and the result was that a large gang of desperadoes were captured and convicted, some getting transportation for life. This agitation affected the northern portion of the district, though indigo was not grown in those parts; but the tract was infested by similar bad characters, who took the cue from their friends away down south, and started quite an epidemic of dacoities—some with murder—not only in British territory but in the Morang (Nepāl Tarai); and similar measures to stop all these serious cases were taken With the assistance of the Nepāl Darbār, we were able to get at three desperate gangs, numbering in all some 60 odd noted dacoits, and were successful in getting the culprits convicted in gang cases, and most of them received heavy sentences. These cases in the Sadar and Arāriā subdivisions have actually stopped dacoities in these tracts, and peace reigns once again."

In the Kishanganj subdivision, however, professional dacoity was not stamped out; and in 1906 this form of crime was more common than in any other district in Bengal, 50 cases being reported or a quarter of the total number in the whole Province. In the Police Administration Report for that year the Inspector-General remarked:—"Purnea continues to be the most troublesome district we have to deal with so far as dacoities are concerned. The convictions obtained during the year, especially the conviction of the famous dacoit Munshia, will, I hope, have a salutary effect;

but in a district where every other man is a potential dacoit provided with a place of refuge across the border, it is too much to expect that we shall entirely stamp out dacoity for some time to come." The dacoit alluded to above, it may be mentioned, confessed to having committed, with 57 comrades, 19 dacoities in Purnea and Darjeeling during the space of 14 months. Four other gangs broken up that year were responsible for no less than 150 cases of dacoity in Purnea and the adjoining districts, their depredations in one case extending back to 1887 and in another to 1892.

There are two criminal castes in the district, viz., the Baids and the Kurariārs. The Baids, who are said to have come originally from Jaunpur, call themselves Baid Pathān Nushtri, and have both Muhammadan and Hindu customs. They often take the title of Khān, but worship Hindu deities, such as Kālī and Sītalā. They bury their dead, but first touch the mouth of the corpse with fire—a mixture of Muhammadan and Hindu rites. They eat pigs and fowls, but not beef. They deal in buffaloes and practise surgery, carrying bags called *dhokri*, in which are contained surgical instruments. Some also cultivate lands, which, it is said, their ancestors never did. They wander about, sometimes in company with *jogis*, in Purnea and North Bengal, and dacoities often take place when they are in the neighbourhood. Criminal castes.

The Kurariārs are a criminal tribe of Purnea and the Nepāl Tarai, whose means of subsistence is theft. They call themselves Naluā or Bideshiā Naluā, live in flimsy huts, and resemble the Maghaiyā Doms in appearance and habits. About 50 years ago a colony of them on the border of Dinājpur gave so much trouble that eventually the expedient of enlisting some of them in the police was tried, on the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief." The plan was a failure and led to scandals necessitating their dismissal. They continued to give trouble, and about the year 1882-83 were subjected to so much restraint that they removed to Titālyā in the Jalpāigurī district. Then, finding no relaxation of surveillance, they migrated to Nepāl, establishing themselves in the three adjacent villages of Phathuriā, Bhajidohā and Kalaibunja, lying about a mile from the Purnea border in a bend of the line of frontier between Digalbānk and Kālīghāt. After their settlement there, the number of dacoities increased rapidly, and the bulk of them was attributed to those Kurariārs who had taken up their abode in the Nepāl Tarai.

The following is an account of their method of committing crime. When the dark nights set in, they leave their huts, go

out in bands of 10 to 30 persons, and travel over the country in various disguises, *e.g.*, as *barkandāzes*, up-country bearers, dealers in native medicines, honey, etc. They are careful to avoid observation, crossing most rivers by swimming instead of by ferries, and when they see any police officer approaching their camp, run into the jungle, leaving their females in the huts. During these expeditions they commit dacoity, robbery and theft, returning home to indulge in a debauch when the moon reappears. They are said to bury their plunder and afterwards dig it up and dispose of it to receivers in Nepāl and British territory. A small community of Kurariārs is still residing at Saifganj near Katihār. They disclaim connection with the Nepāl Kurariārs, but burglary is rife in their neighbourhood and several of them have been convicted of serious offences.

POLICE. The marginal table shows the various thānas and police outposts in the district.

Subdivision.	Thāna.	Outpost.
Purnea	Amur (Kasbā Amur)	Baisi.
	Damdahā ...	Rupauli.
	Gopālpur ...	......
	Kadwā ...	Azīmnagar. Bārsoi.
	Katihār ...	Manihāri.
	Korhā ...	Barāri.
	Purnea ...	Kasbā. Khazānchi Hāt.
Arāriā	Arāriā ...	Palāsi. Sikti.
	Forbesganj ...	Kuāri (beat-post).
	Rānīganj ...	......
Kishanganj	Bahādurganj ...	Digalbānk.
	Islāmpur ...	Choprā. Thākurganj.
	Kishanganj ...	Goālpokhar.

For administrative purposes the thānas of the Purnea subdivision are grouped in two divisions, viz., (1) the Sadar Division, including thānas Purnea, Damdahā, Amur and Korhā; (2) the Kadwā division, including thānas Kadwā, Gopālpur and Katihār. The police force in 1908 consisted of the Superintendent of Police, 1 Assistant Superintendent, 1 Deputy Superintendent, 7 Inspectors, 54 Sub-Inspectors, 61 Head-constables and 530 constables. The total strength of the regular police was, therefore, 655 men, representing one policeman to every 7·6 square miles and to every 2,862 persons. The rural force for the watch and ward of villages in the interior which is maintained from the *chaukīdāri* tax, consisted of 478 *dafadārs* and 4,760 *chaukīdārs*. Including both *dafadārs* and *chaukīdārs*, there was approximately one village policeman to every square mile and to every 358 persons.

JAILS. There is a district jail at Purnea and subsidiary jails at Kishanganj and Arāriā. The sub-jail at Kishanganj has accommodation for 30 male and 3 female prisoners, and that at Arāriā for 15 males and 2 females. The jail at Purnea has accommodation for 282 (276 male and 6 female) prisoners distributed as follows. Barracks with separate sleeping accommodation are provided for 162 male convicts, 5 female convicts, 72 under-trial prisoners, and 4 civil prisoners; the hospital holds 30 prisoners; and there are separate cells for one female and 8 male convicts. The principal industries carried on in the jail are weaving *newār* carpets, *daris* and net bags, *surki*-pounding, oil-pressing, and the manufacture of aloe fibre.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

DISTRICT BOARD. OUTSIDE the municipalities of Purnea, Kishanganj and Katihār, local affairs are managed by the District Board, which has jurisdiction over the whole district, and by the Local Boards constituted for each of the subdivisions of Purnea, Kishanganj and Arāriā. The District Board, as in other districts of Bengal, is responsible for the maintenance of roads, bridges and roadside rest-houses, has the management of public ferries, and exercises a general supervision over Primary and Middle schools. It also manages and maintains several dispensaries and sees to village sanitation and the provision of a proper water-supply in rural areas. To the Local Boards, which work in subordination to it, have been delegated the administration of small sums allotted for certain functions, which will be mentioned later.

The District Board consists of 25 members. The District Magistrate is an *ex-officio* member of the Board, and is invariably its Chairman; there are 6 other *ex-officio* members, twelve are elected and six are nominated by Government. The landholding class and Government servants predominate among the members, the former representing 64 per cent. and the latter 28 per cent. of the total number in 1908-09, while pleaders and *mukhtārs* accounted for 4 per cent.

Income. The Purnea District Board is the poorest, *i.e.*, it has the smallest receipts, in the Division, though it has a larger area under its charge than the two other District Boards of Monghyr and Bhāgalpur. Its average annual income during the 10 years ending 1901-02 was Rs. 1,79,000, of which Rs. 94,000 were derived from rates; and during the quinquennium ending in 1904-05 it amounted to Rs. 1,99,000. In 1908-09 the opening balance was Rs. 90,000, and the income of the year aggregated Rs. 2,37,000, of which Rs. 1,05,000 were obtained from Provincial rates, and Rs. 51,000 from civil works, including Rs. 6,000 realized from tolls on ferries and Rs. 62,000 obtained from pounds. In Purnea, as in other Bengal districts, the road cess is the principal source of income; and the incidence of taxation is

light, being only 11 pies per head of the population, a proportion lower than in any other district of the Division. The income from pounds is unusually important, but fluctuates considerably. In the quinquennium ending in 1899-1900 the average annual receipts were Rs. 48,500 ; in the next quinquennium they were Rs. 49,000, and in 1908-09 altogether Rs. 62,000 were obtained from 105 pounds leased out by the Board. On the other hand, the receipts from ferries are very small ; they averaged Rs. 1,000 per annum in the quinquennium ending in 1904-05, but rose to Rs. 6,000 in 1908-09.

Expenditure. The average annual expenditure during the decade ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 1,79,000, of which Rs 1,20,000 were expended on civil works, Rs. 4,000 on medical relief and Rs. 24,000 on education. During the quinquennium ending in 1904-05 the expenditure averaged Rs. 1,95,000 per annum, and in 1908-09 it amounted to Rs. 2,58,000. By far the largest portion of the income of the District Board is spent on civil works, *i.e.*, the extension and maintenance of communications, the upkeep of staging bungalows, the provision of a proper water-supply by the construction of wells, etc. Over Rs. 1,83,000 were spent on these objects in 1908-09, and of this sum Rs. 1,35,500 were allotted to the extension and maintenance of communications. The District Board now (1909) maintains 123 miles of metalled roads and 1,601 miles of unmetalled roads, besides a number of village tracks with an aggregate length of 389 miles ; the cost of maintaining these roads in 1908-09 was Rs. 304, Rs. 19 and Rs. 7 per mile respectively. After civil works, education constitutes the heaviest charge on the resources of the Board, entailing in 1908-09 an expenditure of Rs. 36,000, or nearly one-seventh of the total expenditure. The inspecting staff employed by it in that year consisted of 17 Inspecting Pandits, and it maintained 5 Middle schools and gave grants in-aid to 5 Middle schools, 63 Upper Primary schools, and 408 Lower Primary schools.

For the relief of sickness the Board maintains 8 dispensaries and aids 7 others ; and when epidemic diseases break out in the interior it despatches native doctors with medicines to the affected villages. During 1908-09 the Board spent 7·8 per cent. of its ordinary income on medical relief and sanitation, a percentage lower than in any other district of the Division except Bhāgalpur. It has also established (in 1903-04) and maintains, with the help of a Government contribution, a veterinary dispensary at Purnea, and it entertains a Veterinary Assistant.

Local Boards. In subordination to the District Board are the Purnea or Sadar, Kishanganj and Arāriā Local Boards, the jurisdiction of

each corresponding to the subdivisional charge of the same name. The system of election in vogue in other parts of the Province has not been introduced, and all the members are nominated by Government. The Purnea or Sadar Local Board consists of 12 members, and the Local Boards at Kishanganj and Arāriā have 13 members each. The Local Boards receive allotments from funds of the District Board and are entrusted with the maintenance of all local roads not directly in charge of the District Engineer, the upkeep of pounds, the charge of minor works of water-supply, and general supervision over village sanitation and dispensaries.

MUNICIPALITIES. There are 3 municipalities in the district, viz., Purnea, Kishanganj and Katihār. The total number of rate-payers in 1908-09 was 5,488, representing 17·8 per cent. of the total number (30,771) of persons residing within municipal limits, as compared with the average of 16·2 per cent. for the whole Division. The average incidence of taxation in that year was Re. 1-14-11 per head of the population, as against the Divisional average of Rs. 2-0-5, and varied from annas 11-2 in Katihār to Re. 1-11 in Kishanganj.

Purnea. The Purnea Municipality, which was established in 1864, is administered by a Municipal Board consisting of 19 Commissioners, of whom twelve are elected, five are nominated and two are *ex-officio* members. The area within municipal limits is 12·5 square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 2,851, representing 20·3 per cent. of the population residing in the municipal area. The average annual income of the Municipality during the 10 years 1891-92 to 1901-02 was Rs. 22,000 and the expenditure Rs. 19,000. In 1908-09 the income aggregated Rs. 30,000, besides an opening balance of Rs. 6,000. The chief source of income is a rate on houses and arable lands assessed at 7½ per cent. on their annual value, which in that year brought in Rs. 14,000. A conservancy rate, levied at 3¼ per cent. on the annual value of holdings, brought in Rs. 5,000, a tax on animals and vehicles realized Rs. 3,000, and market fees Rs. 600. The total incidence of taxation was Re. 1-9-11 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 34,000, excluding Rs. 6,000 expended in advances and deposits. The principal items of expenditure were medical relief, conservancy and public works, which accounted for 30·8, 26·5 and 19·1 per cent. respectively of the disbursements.

Kishanganj. Kishanganj was constituted a municipality in 1887, and has a Municipal Board consisting of 13 Commissioners, of whom 7 are elected, 5 are nominated and one is an *ex-officio* member. The area within municipal limits is 5 square miles, and the

number of rate-payers is 1,082, or 14 per cent. of the population living within the municipal limits. The average annual income during the 10 years ending in 1901-02 was Rs. 8,000, and the expenditure was Rs. 7,000. In 1908-09 the income of the municipality was Rs. 20,000 (besides an opening balance of Rs. 12,000), of which Rs. 6,000 were derived from a tax on animals and vehicles, Rs. 3,000 from a tax on persons levied on the annual income of the assessees at the rate of 9 annas per Rs. 100, and Rs. 1,500 from a conservancy rate. The incidence of taxation was Re. 1-11 per head of the population. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 17,000, the principal items being public works, conservancy and medical relief, which accounted for 27·7, 25·0 and 24·5 per cent. respectively.

Katihār was constituted a municipality in 1905 and has a Municipal Board consisting of 12 members, of whom eleven are nominated and one is an ex-officio member. The area within municipal limits is 1⅜ square miles, and the number of rate-payers is 1,555, or 17·1 per cent of the population living within municipal limits. In 1908-09 the income of the municipality was Rs. 9,000 (excluding an opening balance of Rs. 13,000), of which Rs. 4,000 were derived from a tax on houses and lands assessed at 6¼ per cent. per annum on the annual value of the holdings, Rs. 1,500 from a tax on animals and vehicles, and Rs. 1,000 from pounds. The expenditure in the same year was Rs. 18,000, the principal items being public works, conservancy and medical relief, which accounted for 64·4, 10·3 and 9·4 per cent., respectively. **Katihār.**

CHAPTER XIV.

EDUCATION.

PROGRESS OF EDUCATION. EDUCATION is not widely diffused in Purnea, the census of 1901 showing that only 1,827 persons were able to read and write English, while the total number of persons returned as literate, *i.e.*, able to read and write in any language, was 55,591, representing not more than 3 per cent. (5·7 males and 0·1 females) of the population. This educational backwardness may be accounted for by several causes. Progress is impeded by the fact that a considerable part of the country is under water for a portion of the year and access from village to village is difficult, if not impracticable. A second influence is the unhealthy climate of the district, schools being deserted during outbreaks of fever and cholera. Lastly, the people are mainly agriculturists, and it is common for boys of school-going age to help in the fields or graze cattle from morning till evening instead of attending school.

In spite of these drawbacks, there has been a marked advance in the last 30 years. In 1870-71 there were only 12 Government and aided schools, attended by 288 pupils; but after 1872-73 there was a remarkable improvement, owing to the introduction of Sir George Campbell's scheme of vernacular education, by which Government recognized the existing village schools and aided them by adequate but not too liberal grants. In 1880-81 the number of schools had increased to 698 with 9,150 pupils, and in 1890-91 the number of the former rose to 975 and of the latter to 16,012, the decade thus showing an increase of more than 28 per cent. in schools and 42 per cent. in scholars. But little advance was made in the next ten years, for the returns of 1900-01 showed 973 schools with an attendance of 18,967 pupils.

In 1908 there were 919 educational institutions with 19,884 pupils on the rolls, viz., 766 public institutions with an attendance of 18,445 pupils and 153 private institutions with an attendance of 1,439. The number of boys receiving instruction was 18,057, representing 12·5 per cent. of the boys of school-going age. The number both of schools and pupils has been falling off every year since 1904-05. The decline is attributed to epidemics of cholera, small-pox and fever, to the high price of food grains, which deters

people of the middle classes from maintaining a *guru*, and to the rise of wages, caused by the expansion of the jute trade and the construction of railway lines. It is reported that, owing to this increase in the rate of wages, the teachers in village schools do not hesitate to throw up an avocation which brings them in but a small income.

The inspecting agency consists (in 1908) of a Deputy Inspector of Schools, seven Sub-Inspectors and two Assistant Sub-Inspectors.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS. There are three High schools in the district, which had 365 scholars on the rolls on the 31st March 1908. One of these, the Purnea Zila school, is maintained by Government, and the other two, viz., the High schools at Arāriā and Kishanganj, are aided by it. There were in the same year seven Middle English schools with 412 pupils on the rolls, but one, an unaided school at Champānagar, has since been closed. Of the other six schools, two, in Purnea City and Katihār, are aided by Government, and four, situated at Bārsoi, Churli, Forbesganj and Manihāri, are aided by the District Board. The number of Middle Vernacular schools, is six and the attendance at them 331; five of these latter schools, at Abādpur, Amtolā, Dasgrām, Dholbajā and Kasbā, are managed by the District Board, and one, at Patni, is aided by it.

There are thus 16 secondary schools with 1,108 pupils, the average attendance at High schools being 122, at Middle English schools 60, and at Middle Vernacular schools 48. It is apparent that secondary education has not made much way among the people. A large proportion of the population consists of Muhammadans, who are willing to give their children a primary education, but have no desire for them to advance to higher standards. Among Hindus, the low castes are numerous, and with them also higher education is not in demand.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS. Altogether, there are 651 Primary schools for boys attended by 14,353 boys and 1,158 girls, the average number of pupils in each school being 21. Of these schools, 70 are Upper Primary schools, 5 being managed by Government, 64 being aided and one being unaided. Of the 581 Lower Primary schools, 400 receive grants-in-aid and 181 are unaided. It is estimated that 10·6 per cent. of the boys of school-going age receive primary instruction. Three night schools have also been opened, but they are merely primary schools held in the evening for persons who work in the day and wish to get some knowledge of writing and accounts. The only school of this class calling for special mention is the railway night school at Katihār, which has been established for railway drivers and employés. There is now (1908) one primary school to every 5 villages and to every 7·7 square miles.

GIRLS' SCHOOLS.

For the education of girls 27 Primary schools have been opened, but only 499 girls read at them. All these schools are Lower Primary schools, and two of them are Model girls' schools. There are also 1,174 girls reading in boys' schools, so that the total number of girls under instruction is 1,673.

OTHER SCHOOLS.

Six training schools for the instruction of Primary school teachers have been opened at Bārsoi, Kishanganj, Korhā, Purnea, Rājokhar and Ramganj, but only 65 teachers study at them. It is reported that the district is so backward, and the people so averse to leaving their homes, that it is with great difficulty that the *gurus* can be induced to join training schools. There are no industrial or technical schools. The number of private institutions is 153, including 42 *maktabs*, 26 Korān schools and one Sanskrit *tol*. There are also 65 *maktabs* with 1,218 pupils, and one Madrasa with 44 pupils at Muhamdiā, which comply with departmental standards and are therefore classed as public institutions. At the Madrasa instruction is given in Arabic and Persian, and poor boys receive a free education.

EDUCATION OF MUHAMMADANS.

The total number of Muhammadans attending schools of all classes in 1908 was 8,996, representing 45·2 per cent of the total number of scholars. As the proportion of Muhammadans to the population is 42·3 per cent., it would appear that they are not behind the Hindus in their appreciation of the advantages of education. As a rule, however, they are not in favour of any higher standard than the primary; and in secondary schools the proportion of Muhammadans falls to 25·9 per cent.

CHAPTER XV.

GAZETTEER.

Arāriā.—A village situated on the left bank of the Panār, 30 miles north of Purnea, which has given its name to the north-western subdivision of the district. It formerly contained a Munsif's court and a police station, while a criminal court was located in the neighbouring village of Turkeli. The courts were removed over 30 years ago to Basantpur on the right bank of the Panār, four miles west of Arāriā, and that place is the headquarters station, but it is still commonly called Arāriā. The village is also popularly known as Kareyā, which is the name of a *milik* in Basantpur.

Arāriā Subdivision.—North-western subdivision of the district, lying between 25° 56′ and 26° 35′ N., and between 87° 3′ and 87° 42′ E., and extending over 1,077 square miles. The subdivision is bounded on the north by Nepāl; on the east by thāna Bahādurganj in the Kishanganj subdivision; on the south by thānas Amur Kasbā, Purnea (Sadar) and Damdahā of the Purnea subdivision; and on the west by the river Kosi, which separates it from the Supaul subdivision in the Bhāgalpur district. It is an alluvial tract of flat country with occasional swamps and stretches of high ground. The soil is generally sandy, but the portion lying to the north and east of the Panār is rich in alluvial deposits and is more fertile. The western half of the subdivision has been overlaid with a thick deposit of sand in the course of the westward march of the ever-shifting Kosi. There is also a long belt of fairly high prairie-like ground, which extends throughout the entire length of the subdivision southwards as far as Purnea, and constitutes the principal grazing ground of the subdivision.

The rivers of the subdivision may be grouped into two systems, the Kosi group, including the Kosi and its several branches, and the Panār group. The former drains the extreme west, and the latter the north and east of the subdivision. The principal rivers of the Kosi group are the Pheriani, Latchha and Hiran, all subsidiary branches or channels of the Kosi river, and the Kamlā and Saurā rivers. The three former carry a considerable portion of

the waters of the Kosi during the rains, and at that season are transformed into rapid streams, which sometimes inundate almost the whole country west of Rānīganj up to the main channel of the Kosi. The main bed of the Kosi lies to the extreme west of the subdivision, but the channels of deep water constantly change, new ones being opened up and old ones choked by sand banks. The Kamlā is a swampy sluggish stream, which flows southward into thāna Purnea, where it is joined by the Saurā, the combined river emptying itself into the Ganges opposite Sakrigāli. The Saurā is a marshy stream, narrow but difficult to cross, which rises in the neighbourhood of Hingna and Kadwā and flows southward into thāna Purnea. It merges in the Kamlā south of the town of Purnea.

To the east the river system consists of the Parwan or Panār, the Bakrā and the Katuā. The Parwan is a deep tortuous hill stream rising in the Nepāl Tarai. It pursues a south and south-easterly course through thāna Forbesganj and passing east of Basantpur, continues a circuitous course through thāna Arāriā into thāna Purnea. It ultimately empties itself into the Ganges. The Bakrā is a small and very rapid stream, troublesome and shifting. It rises in Nepāl and flows in a southerly direction, passing between the two thānas of Forbesganj and Arāriā. It formerly joined the Parwan or Panār river near Chandarni, but has recently taken a different course, and instead of emptying itself into the Parwan at Chandarni, follows an old channel (*marā dhar*) known as the Hatkuli, and joins the Katuā river near Matiāri in thāna Arāriā. The Panār is also shifting its course and gradually moving westwards, thus threatening the present headquarters station. The Katuā river has its origin in the Tarai, flows in a southerly direction through thāna Arāriā, and passes out into thāna Amur Kasbā.

The population of the subdivision was 416,985 in 1901, as against 432,425 in 1891, the density being 387 persons to the square mile. It contains 600 villages, at one of which, Basantpur, the headquarters are situated. The principal marts are Basantpur, Forbesganj and Rānīganj, and cattle fairs are held at Madanpur and Chandradihi. In the Rānīganj thāna there are extensive pasture lands, on which herds of buffaloes are reared, clarified butter (*ghī*) forming an important export. The principal zamīndārs are the heirs of Mr. A. J. Forbes, who settled at a place called Forbesganj after him; the Sultānpur estate owned by them comprises nearly half the subdivision. Another old family of zamīndārs is represented by the Thākurs of Belwa. For administrative purposes the subdivision is divided into three thānas, viz.,

(1) Arâriā, with two outposts Palāsi and Sikti, (2) Forbesganj with the Kuāri beat-post, and (3) Rānīganj.

Asuragarh.—A ruined fort in the south-west of the Kishanganj subdivision situated close to the eastern bank of the Mahānandā, about 12 miles south of Kishanganj and 4 miles east of Dulālganj. The fort, which is about 1,200 yards in circumference, rises from the surrounding plain to the height of 10 or 12 feet. It is enclosed by earthen ramparts, and inside are the *debris* of many buildings, the lower chambers of which have been found under the surface. The story locally current as to the origin of the fort is that there were five brothers, Benu, Barijān, Asura, Nanha and Kanha, who each built a *garh* or fortified residence and named it after himself, but only those known as Benugarh, Barijāngarh and Asuragarh can be clearly traced. It is said that the five brothers lived in the Vikramāditya period, and that the forts were all built in a night. The people on the spot state that some hundred years ago the place was covered with trees, and that no Hindu ventured to live on it, lest Asura Deo should be offended. At length a holy Musalmān came, and, killing a cow, took possession. His descendants then cleared and cultivated the place. Hindus come occasionally here to make offerings to Asura Deo. The Muhammadans, on the other hand, venerate the saint by whom the ruin was cleared: and the faithful assemble, after the fair of Nekmard in Dinājpur, to celebrate his memory. The chronicles of the Khagrā family relate that Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain, the ninth Rājā, erected a fort here after the loss of Jalālgarh, which was taken from his predecessor Muhammad Jalīl by Saulat Jang (Saiyad Ahmed Khān); this fort was probably built on the site of the old Hindu fort.

Baldiābāri.—A village situated about a mile and a half from Nawābganj in the south of the district. This village was the site of the battle between Shaukat Jang and Sirāj-ud-daula, of which a description has been given in Chapter II.

Banaili Rāj—A large estate situated in Purnea, Mālda, Monghyr and Bhāgalpur. The founder of the family which now owns the estate was Hazāri Chaudhri, who about 1780 A. D. acquired by purchase *pargana* Tirakhardā in this district. His son, Rājā Dular Singh Bahādur, acquired estates in Bhāgalpur, Monghyr and Mālda about the year 1800 and left two sons, Rājā Bidyānand Singh and Kumār Rudranand Singh. There was litigation between them, which resulted in the division of the properties then held by the family into two equal parts. One part was given to Rājā Bidyānand Singh and the other to Kumār Rudranand Singh, grandfather of the Srīnagar

Kumārs. Subsequent to the partition between Rājā Bidyānand Singh and his brother, the former purchased Mahālat Kharagpur, an extensive property in Monghyr. Rājā Bidyānand Singh Bahādur died in 1851, and was succeeded by his son Rājā Lilānand Singh Bahādur, who also added to the estate by purchasing Chāndpur Husain and *tāluk* Khajuriā in 1860. He died in 1883, and left three sons, Rājā Padmānand Singh Bahādur, Kumār Kālānand Singh and Kumār Krityānand Singh (a posthumous son). In the year 1888 a suit was instituted on behalf of the two minor sons, Kālānand Singh and Krityānand Singh, through their mother Rānī Sītābatī, in the court of the District Judge of Bhāgalpur. This ended in a compromise decree, under which the two minor sons were to be owners of a nine-anna share of the property, while Rājā Padmānand Singh Bahādur retained the remaining seven annas.

In 1903 Kumār Chandranand Singh, son of Rāja Padmānand Singh Bahādur, brought a suit against his father for partition, which also ended in a compromise decree, the son being declared to be owner of a 3½-anna share, and Rājā Padmānand Singh Bahādur of the remaining 3½-anna share. Subsequently however, in September 1905, Rājā Padmānand Singh transferred to his son his rights and interest in his share, so that the present (1908) owners of the Banaili Rāj are Kumārs Kālānand Singh and Krityānand Singh, to the extent of nine annas, and Kumār Chandranand Singh, to the extent of seven annas. The Collector of Bhāgalpur, having been appointed receiver for the seven-annas share by the District Judge of Bhāgalpur, has given a lease of it to Kumārs Kālānand Singh and Krityānand Singh for 12 years (from 1312 to 1323 F.S.) so that the latter are now (1908) in possession of the entire estate. The seven-annas share is involved in debt to the extent of about 50 lakhs of rupees, Kumārs Kālānand Singh and Krityānand Singh being the principal creditors; and consequently the Court of Wards in 1906 took over charge of that share on the application of Kumār Chandranand Singh; but the actual management of the entire Banaili Rāj is in the hands of Kumārs Kālānand Singh and Krityānand Singh. The rent-roll of the entire estate is about 14 lakhs a year, and the revenue and cesses payable annually are Rs. 2,56,244. In addition to this, Rs. 17,445 are payable to superior landlords on account of rent.

The estate derives its name from Banaili, a village in *pargana* Haveli in this district. It contained the residence of the founder of the estate and continued to be the family headquarters until the late Rājā Lilānand Singh Bahādur moved to Deorhi Rāmnagar, a few miles distant from Banaili and thence to Deorhi

Champānagar. Deorhi Rāmnagar is the seat of his eldest son, Rājā Padmānand Singh Bahādur, and Deorhi Champānagar of his two younger sons, Kumār Kālānand Singh and Kumār Krityānand Singh.

Barijāngarh.—A ruined fort in the Kishanganj subdivision, situated five miles south of Bahādurganj. It is so called because, according to legend, it was built by Barijan, a brother of Benu, Rājā of Benugarh. Inside the enclosure may be traced a tank called Dāk Pokhar, in connection with which absurd stories are told, and implicitly believed in, by the villagers. One of the least extravagant is that the earth of the tank, if taken near any other tank, has the power of immediately drawing forth from it all the fish it contains.

Bārsoi.—A village in the south-east of the Purnea subdivision, situated on the eastern bank of the Mahānandā, 34 miles south-east of Purnea and 8 miles south of Balarāmpur. Population (1901) 3,101. It has one of the principal markets in the district, which is held every Wednesday and is largely attended. The chief articles of trade are dried fish, molasses (*gur*), country-made cloth, chillies, turmeric and vegetables. *Paikārs*, or petty traders, buy up these commodities in considerable quantities, and retail them throughout the district. Gunny-bags and mats of local manufacture are also largely sold. There is a police outpost in the village, and to the north of it is Bārsoi junction on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, from which a branch line runs to Kishanganj.

Basantpur.—A village in the north-west of the district situated on the right bank of the Panār river, 3½ miles south-east of the Arāriā railway station, with which it is connected by a good metalled road. Population (1901) 2,792. It contains the civil and criminal courts, the sub-jail, the residence of the Subdivisional Officer, a sub-registry office, thāna, dispensary, a High school, aided by Government, and a District Board inspection bungalow. It is otherwise an insignificant village in the middle of a sandy plain, containing an agricultural and trading population supplemented by a few officials, clerks and legal practitioners.

Benugarh.—A ruined fort in the Kishanganj subdivision, situated about eight miles west of Bahādurganj. The ruins consist of ramparts, enclosing an area of nearly an acre, and are ascribed to Benu Rājā, the brother of Asura mentioned in the article on Asuragarh.

Chotapahar.—A small hill in the south of the Purnea subdivision close to Manihāri. It is about 250 feet high and consists of an inferior kind of limestone, which makes, however, good road

metalling. It is probable that a Hindu temple formerly stood on or near the hill, as some carved slabs of black stone have been found near it ; but at present the summit is occupied by a Muhammadan grave, which is rapidly falling into decay.

Dharampur Estate.—An estate in the Kishanganj subdivision held by Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl Chaudhri, who also owns another estate, called the Nazarganj estate after the place containing his residence. The estate was acquired by Bābu Nackched Lāl Chaudhri, grandfather of the present proprietor, and was considerably increased by his father, the late Bābu Dharam Chānd Lāl Chaudhri, a wealthy banker of Purnea, after whom it is called. The rent-roll of the estate is nine lakhs, and the revenue demand is a little over four lakhs.

Dharampur Pargana.—A *pargana* in the west of the district with an area of about 964 square miles. It is the property of the Mahārājā of Darbhangā, and is said to have been acquired by his ancestor Mahesh Thākur in the following manner. Mahesh Thākur was a priest of the Rājās of Tirhut, and, when they were conquered by the Emperor of Delhi, sent his pupil Raghunandan Thākur to Akbar's Court. He gained Akbar's favour by his skill in polemics and a lucky prophecy. He foretold a storm, in which a tree, under which Akbar's tent was pitched, would be destroyed. The tent was removed, and some hours afterwards the tree was rent by lightning. Akbar thereupon conferred upon Raghunandan the whole of Tirhut, or at least an income of two per cent. of its revenues, which, at his request, was transferred to his master, Mahesh Thākur. The estate comprising the *pargana* is divided into three parts called *zilās*, viz., Bīrnagar to the north-west, Bhawānīpur to the south of Bīrnagar, and Gondwārā to the east. At the Permanent Settlement it was assessed at a revenue of Rs. 2,31,585.

Dharārā.—A village in the extreme west of the district, situated about 12 miles south of Rānīganj, and 15 miles north-east of Damdahā. There is an indigo factory here and the ruins of an old fort called Satligarh. At the north-west corner of the fort is a monolith called Manikthām, of which the following description is given by Colonel L. A. Waddell, I.M.S.—"The pillar is of thick, inelegant shape, and has the same general proportions and appearance as the Ghāzipur edict pillar, now in the grounds of the Benares College. The stone is a light reddish granite of such fine texture as to appear almost like sandstone. It can scarcely be called a rude cylinder, as it is perfectly cylindrical and its surface is smooth and almost polished. It is no longer erect, but is inclined at an angle of about 65°—this inclination, I am informed, was given it about three years ago by the then Collector of the district, who

dug around the pillar and then tilted it over in this way to make sure his excavation had reached the base.

"As the appearance of the monolith was suggestive of its being probably an edict pillar, and its greater portion was buried under ground, I had it excavated. This operation showed that the pillar had originally been implanted for over half its length in a foundation of irregular layers of bricks and mortar. The pillar retained its smooth and almost polished surface throughout its extent, except in a few portions where this surface has scaled off, and where, about its middle third, the west face of the pillar had been very roughly chipped away to form an irregular oblong depression about 6 feet in length and about 2½ feet in breadth. The most careful search all over the pillar, however, failed to find any trace of an inscription. The basal extremity of the pillar was sharply truncated across and rested in the sand, and here immediately under the pillar was found a gold coin of Indo-Scythic character.

"The upper extremity of the pillar is perforated by a hole (12 inches deep, and in diameter 5½ inches at the top and 3½ inches at the bottom), which evidently formed the socket for the stem or bolt of a crowning ornament; and in forcibly wrenching out this latter, top of the shaft has been extensively fractured. Local tradition alleges that the shaft was formerly surmounted by the figure of a lion, but that this was removed many hundreds of years ago, no one knows where. The dimensions of the pillar are as follow:—total length is 19 feet 11 inches (of which 7½ feet are above ground); circumference at 3 feet from summit is 112½ inches.

"Regarding the purpose of this pillar there must still remain much doubt. The villagers in the neighbourhood call it "Manikthâm" or "the precious pillar" of Hindu fable, and worship it. Dr. Buchanan failed to get any local history or tradition concerning the stone. Now-a-days, the villagers assert that this was this scene of the *Mahâbhârata* episode of the Sivaic Hiranya Kâns'* attempted slaughter of his son Prahlâdha for devotion to the workship of Vishnu. King Hiranya Kâns, it is alleged, lived in the adjoining fortress and sent out his son to be bound to this pillar and put to death here, when on the appeal of Prahlâdha to his deity, the latter in the form of Nara Sinha appeared incarnate in the lion figure surmounting the capital and saved his devotee. In this legendary tradition it is remarkable that the pillar is associated both with a human sacrifice and the presence of a

* The name is so pronounced locally, *not* Hiranya Kashipu as is usual.

surmounting lion: the former possibly suggestive of its being a *satī* pillar, while the latter indicates rather an edict (Asoka?) pillar. Perhaps it may be the upper part of an edict pillar which has been utilized for *satī* purposes. The stone had originally been carefully fashioned, while the rudely chipped depression is evidently of more recent date. The coin, too, with its Sivaic emblem on the reverse, might imply the creed of the person who erected the stone in this locality, thus coinciding with the popular tradition. It is also curious to find that the river which flows past the further side of the fort is named the Hiranya *nadī*, thus lending local colour to the applicability of the *Mahābhārata* legend. The coin is described on page 209 of Von Sallet, Die Nachfolger Alexanders des Grossen. It is a coin of Vasudeva or Bazodeo (2nd Century A.D.)." *

A slightly different version of the legend is given by Mr. Byrne in the Purnea Settlement Report. "Formerly the demon king Hiranya Kasipu, who lived in the Satya Yuga, had his palace here. His son Prahlād insisted on believing in and uttering the name of his god. The father asked where his god was: the son replied that he was omnipresent: the father then asked if he was inside that pillar. Prahlād said "Yes", and then the father attacked the pillar with a sword hoping to injure his god. He cut off a portion of it, and then an incarnation of god, called Narasingha (half a man and half a lion), emerged and killed Hiranya Kasipu. The whole palace was then involved in ruin."

Forbesganj.—A village in the north-west of the Arāriā subdivision, situated 42 miles (by rail) north-west of Purnea and 18 miles north-west of Arāriā. Population (1901) 2,029. Forbesganj is a market of importance, the greater portion of the trade with Nepāl in the Arāriā subdivision passing through it. A number of Mārwāri merchants have settled here and deal in grain, jute and piece-goods, several of them having branch firms in Nepāl. Jute is the principal article of trade, and there are two jute presses worked by steam. The village also contains an inspection bungalow, an out door dispensary maintained by private subscriptions and by the District Board, a Middle English school and a thāna. The railway station at Forbesganj is at present the terminus on the Purnea section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, but the line is to be extended to Mahesri on the Nepāl frontier, seven miles from Forbesganj, and construction work is in progress. The place is called after the late Mr A J. Forbes, proprietor of the Sultānpur estate, who settled here. It is said that Forbesganj

* *Note on the Manikthamn Monolith*, Proceedings, A. S. B., 1890, pp. 243-5.

has the best climate in the district, and it commands a good view of the Himālayas on clear winter days.

Haveli Pargana.—A *pargana*, also known as Haveli Purnea extending over an area of 787 square miles. At the time of the Permanent Settlement it was held by Rānī Indrabatī, the daughter of Madhu Singh, Rājā of Darbhangā, having been given to her as her dowry on her marriage with Rājā Indra Nārāyan Singh. The latter having died childless, her agent, Bābu Bijay Gobind Singh of Pharkiya (a *pargana* in North Monghyr) personated a relative of her deceased husband, and got himself adopted by her. Then, as *kartaputra*, or manager, he took possession of her estates and proceeded to enjoy them. Litigation ensued, and both sides were financed by Bābu Pratāp Singh, a banker of Murshidābād, who in 1850 purchased the *pargana* in execution of his own decrees. Subsequently Bābu Dharam Chānd Lāl, a Purnea banker, son of Nackched Lāl, purchased the estate from Bābu Pratāp Singh, and it now stands in the name of his wife, Musamat Bhagwānbatī Chaudhrain of Purnea.

Jalālgarh.—A ruined fort in the Purnea subdivision situated 13 miles north of Purnea close to the Jalālgarh railway station. It stands on what was formerly an island in an old channel of the Kosi river, and is a very conspicuous ruin in good preservation. It is a large quadrangular structure with lofty walls, and was built by the Muhammadans as a frontier post to protect the border against invasion from Nepāl. According to the chronicles of the Khagra family, it was built for this purpose by the first Rājā of Khagrā, Saiyid Muhammad Jalāl-ud-dīn, on whom the title of Rājā was conferred by Jahāngīr (1605-27); and, according to other accounts, by the Nawāb of Purnea, Saif Khān, in 1722. It appears, however, to have been in existence before the latter date. According to the *Riyāzu-s-Salātīn*, "the Rājā of Bīrnagar had a force of 15,000 cavalry and infantry; and other inhabitants of that part of the Chakwār tribe, etc., were refractory and of plundering propensity, and used to annoy much the travellers. Therefore, on the limits of the Morang, the fort of Jalālgarh was erected, and a commandant, in charge of the fort, was posted there." It then proceeds to relate how Saif Khān, on being appointed *faujdār* of Purnea, was also made commandant of Jalālgarh and given the *jāgīr* attached to that post. Subsequently, the fort was held by the seventh Rājā of Khagrā, Saiyad Muhammad Jalīl, who refused to pay revenue to the Nawāb, Saulat Jang, *i.e.*, Saiyad Ahmed Khān. The latter, therefore, made an expedition against him, captured the fort, and took him prisoner.

In the early part of the 19th century, we find that the Magistrate of Purnea, in consequence of the unhealthiness of the town of Purnea, recommended the removal of the headquarters to Jalālgarh, which he described as 'elevated, open, and at a distance from jungle, while the walls of the old fortress might be turned to account in the construction of a safe and commodious jail.' * There is a tradition that a Muhammadan fanatic raised the standard of revolt here during the Mutiny, and tried to encourage his followers by the usual assurances that he would swallow the bullets of the infidel soldiery. The end of the movement was ignominious, for, after inducing his dupes to bring him contributions in gold, he disappeared in the night and was never heard of again.

Kāliāganj.—A village in the north-east of the Kishanganj subdivision situated on the Mahānandā river. Formerly, it was a centre of the jute trade, and an agent of the East India Company used to live here for the purchase of gunny-bags. The trade of the place has declined owing to the decrease of river traffic, which has been diverted to the railway. A hydraulic hand-power jute press may still be seen on the roadside about a mile from the inspection bungalow.

Kānkjol.—A *pargana* in the south of the district with an area of 148 square miles. There is a curious legend about the origin of the name, which is also current in some districts of Bengal. It is said that the Emperor Akbar sent an envoy into several districts in the Gangetic delta with orders to explore them and their waterways, and that, wherever he landed, he beat a drum and proclaimed the suzerainty of Akbar. From this was derived the name Kānkjol meaning "drum on the side." † The name is an old one, being the designation in Todar Mal's rent-roll of a *mahāl* in *Sarkār* Audambar or Tāndah. There is also a *pargana* Kānkjol, south of the Ganges, in the Rājmahāl subdivision of the Santāl Parganas. "Kānkjol," writes General Cunningham, "is an old town, which was once the headquarters of an extensive province, including the whole of the present district of Rājmahal, and a large tract of country which is now on the east of the Ganges, but which in former days was on its west bank. Even at the present day this tract is still recorded as belonging to Kānkjol; and I was, therefore, not surprised to hear the zamīndārs of Ināyatpur and the surrounding villages to the east of the Ganges say that their lands were in Kānkjol. The simple

* W. Hamilton, *Description of Hindostan*, I, 236.

† *Purnea Settlement Report*, p. 17.

explanation is that the Ganges has changed its course. At the time of the Muhammadan occupation it flowed under the walls of Gaur, in the channel of the present Bhāgīrathī river. Part of the Trans-Gangetic Kânkjol is in the Purnea district bounded by Akbarpur, and part in the Mālda district bounded by Mālda proper."*

Kārāgolā or Karhāgolā.—A village in the extreme south of the Purnea subdivision, situated on the river Ganges, six miles south of Kārāgolā Road station on the Bengal and North-Western Railway. It was formerly an important trade centre, of which there is a mention in the *Riyāzu-s-Salātin* (1788). It is stated in that work that "Gandāh-golā (Kārāgolā) on the banks of the Ganges was the resort of traders and *mahajans* from various places. Owing to cheapness of food-grains and comforts, landholders, travellers and professional men came from every part and dwelt there." Later, it was the terminus of the Ganges-Darjeeling road, and a steamer used to ply between it and the East Indian Railway at Sāhibganj. The railway has superseded the Kārāgolā route for general traffic, and has deprived it of its trade; but it is still a place of call for the Ganges despatch service, the steamers of the India General Steam Navigation Company touching two miles below the village. In the latter there are a police outpost, inspection bungalow and post office.

The place is best known for a large fair, which has declined of late years, but was formerly one of the biggest in Bengal. Originally, it is said, the fair was held at Pirpainthi on the south of the Ganges in the Bhāgalpur district when the Ganges flowed at the foot of the Pīrpainthi hill. The date of its transfer to the northern or Purnea bank is not known, but it must have been very soon after the commencement of the 19th century. The fair continued to be held down to 1824 at Kachuā Kol, but during the six following years the site was removed to Mandigorendi. In 1832 the site was again changed, and until 1843 the fair was held at Kāntānagar about two miles east of Korhā. In 1844, for the first time, it was held on land belonging to the Mahārajā of Darbhangā in a village called Bakhiyā Sukhai. In 1851 the site was transferred to Kārāgolā, which is within the same noblemen's property; and the fair was held there till 1887, when it was again removed to Kāntānagar owing to the erosion of the bank at Kārāgolā.

The fair is held on a large sandy plain, which, during the period of its continuance, is covered with streets of small shops constructed of bamboos and mats. In these shops nearly every

* Reports, Arch. Surv. Ind., Vol. XV, p. 37.

article of native domestic use is to be found. There is a very large sale of cloth of every kind, from thick English woollens to fine Dacca muslins. Cotton longcloths of European and native makes, cut into lengths to make *dhotis* for men or *sāris* for women, are also abundant. A brisk trade is carried on in iron ploughshares, knives and razors, brass and iron cooking utensils; the southern thānas of Purnea supply blankets and rugs from near Katihār and Kadwā, and reed mats from Balarāmpur, while tents and *darīs* are brought in from elsewhere. Monghyr finds a market here for her ornamental cabinet wares, as well as for commoner sorts of furniture, such as chairs, tools and tables; while her quarries supply querns, or hand-mills for grinding corn, *sils* or flat stones on which spices are pounded, and *lauriyas* or rolling pins. Calcutta and some of the large up-country towns send dressed leather, boots, looking-glasses, shawls, Rāmpur *chādars*, silks and *kinkhabs*. The spice market is generally a large one; but only as much food-grain as is necessary for the wants of visitors is to be obtained. Though Kārāgolā is on the Ganges, it has long been a famous frontier fair for Bhotiās and Nepālis. Their attendance has diminished, but they still visit it, bringing knives, *kukris*, yak tails, ponies, and drugs, such as *chiretta* and musk. They also supply a peculiar article of commerce, the carapace of the pangolin or *bajarkit* (*Manis pentadactyla*), with the dried flesh attached, which fetches a high price, as in the opinion of both Bengalis and Bihāris it forms the most powerful of aphrodisiacs. The fair is held on the Māghi Pūrnimā, *i. e.*, the full moon day of Māgh (February), which is an auspicious day among Hindus for bathing in the Ganges, for on it *Kalijuga* began.

Kasbā.—A village in the Purnea subdivision, situated eight miles north of Purnea. Population (1901) 7,600. Kasbā, which lies, on the Eastern Bengal State Railway, is the chief centre of the rice trade in the district, and is also an important entrepot for jute, the annual sales of which are said to amount to over ten lakhs. Messrs. Ralli Brothers have an agency here and work a jute press. A number of Mārwāri firms have also established themselves in the village, and deal in jute, grain and hides.

Katihār.—A village in the south of the Purnea subdivision, situated 18 miles south of Purnea. Population (1901) 9,761. Katihār is the chief railway centre in the district, being an important junction at which the Bengal and North-Western Railway meets the Bihār section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway. The latter is continued to Manihāri Ghāt on the Ganges, whence a steamer plies to Sakrigali, establishing communication with the East Indian Railway. The junction is especially noticeable for

the thousands of labourers who pass through it during the cold weather on their way to the eastern districts. Formerly they used to cross the Kosi from Khanwā Ghāt to Anchrā Ghāt and travel by a road along the north of the district, but they have given up this route since the through line to Katihār was opened. The rush east is noticed at Katihār at the end of September and lasts till the middle of December, the return west going on from the end of February till June. The coolies travel at reduced fares and generally go to Pārbatīpur, whence they separate for Goalundo, Silīgurī and Dhubri.

Katihār is the headquarters of the sheep-breeding trade of Purnea, and rough blankets are manufactured by a colony of Gareris. There is also a large export of rice and oil-seeds. The town contains two dispensaries, one of which belongs to the railway, a Munsif's court, police station and Middle English school. It was formerly known as Saifganj; but when the railway was extended to it, in order to avoid confusion between two names so similar as Sāhibganj and Saifganj, the name Katihār was given to the station from the neighbouring village of that name, which also gives its name to the surrounding *pargana*. The place is said to have been established by Nawāb Saif Khān about 150 years ago.

Khagrā.—A village situated within the Kishanganj Municipality, which contains the residence of an influential Muhammadan family and is the headquarters of the estate owned by them. The present family residence was built here by Saiyad Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain at the end of the 18th century. He also set up two *āsthānas*, one dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad to the north of Khagrā, and the other on the south of it in honour of Muhammad's sceptre. Close to the latter is the burial ground of the family. To the east of it, at a distance of 2 miles, he established a market called Kutubganj, and also erected a *karbala* called Husainbāgh.

Khagrā is best known for a large fair held every year in the cold weather under the management of the estate, which is attended by 50,000 to 100,000 persons. A great number of elephants, camels, ponies, sheep and cattle are sold, and much general merchandise changes hands. This fair was started by the late Nawāb Atā Husain Khān in 1883, and was named Weekes' *Melā* after the then Collector, who took much interest in its establishment. The goods exposed for sale do not differ materially from those at other fairs, but its distinctive character lies in the fact that it is a frontier fair, and also in the practice of awarding prizes for live stock and agricultural produce.

Khagrā Estate.—A large estate in *pargana* Sūrjyapur in the north-east of the district with a rent-roll of Rs. 2,81,007 and a land revenue demand of Rs. 1,54,698. The family owning this estate has a long and interesting history, from which it appears that its ancestors were wardens of the marches and exercised control over the north of the district. According to its chronicles, the founder of the family was Saiyad Khān Dastur, who did good service under the Emperor Humāyūn in the war against Sher Shāh and was rewarded, in A. H. 962, *i.e.*, 1545 A. D., by the grant of a *sanad* conferring on him, together with the title of Kānungo, the zamīndāri of Sūrjyapur, which was formerly held by a Hindu Rājā named Sukhdeo. Sūrjyapur was at that time overrun by the Bhotiās, and Saiyad Khān Dastur succeeded in obtaining possession of a part of it after a hard struggle. At his invitation, Saiyad Rai Khān, a Musairi Saiyad of Tarmuz in Persia, came with his brothers to settle in the *pargana.* They were attacked by the Bhotiās, but succeeded in defeating them, and when the Bhotiās rallied their forces, again drove them back and pursued them as far as Haldibāri (now in the Jalpāigurī district), where Rai Khān built a fort. Rai Khān married the only daughter of Saiyad Khān Dastur, and succeeded to the property on his death, subsequently receiving, in 1772, a *farmān* confirming him in the zamīndāri and the title of Kānungo.

His son, Saiyad Muhammad Jalāl-ud-dīn Khān, also spent most of his life fighting the Bhotiās and other hill tribes, and is said to have built the fort of Jalālgarh as a defence against their incursions. As a reward for his services the Emperor Jahāngir granted him the title of Rājā. He was succeeded by his son Saiyad Razā, during whose time the Bhotiās again invaded Sūrjyapur. He defeated them at Mundmalla on the border of Sūrjyapur and drove them back to the hills, signalizing the end of the pursuit by shooting an arrow through a *sāl* tree, which is still pointed out. In 1633 he was given a grant of Tappa Barban in the Colgong *pargana*, then held by one Daulatmand Rai, which was infested by bands of robbers who prevented travellers coming to Rājmahāl. Saiyad Razā extirpated the banditti and was rewarded by the title of Rājā. Soon afterwards he met his death, being assassinated by one of his servants, who had been bribed by Daulatmand Rai. The servant, however, paid dearly for his treachery, for Saiyad Razā, though unarmed and on the point of death, killed him with one blow of his fist.

There is little of interest to record of the Rājās who succeeded him, until the time of Saiyad Muhammad Jalīl, who refused to

pay revenue to the Nawāb, Saulat Jang, on the ground that neither he nor his ancestors had ever paid it. He went further and preferred a claim to the sums collected for the Nawāb by an agent named Hāfiz Rahmat Khān during a disputed succession some years before. Being unable to meet the Nawāb in the field, he took refuge in the fort of Jalālgarh, where he thought he would be safe, as the rains had set in and a campaign seemed out of the question. The Nawāb, however, set out at the head of a large force, captured the fort and took him prisoner. The estate was confiscated, but the sons of Muhammad Jalīl were allowed to succeed on attaining their majority.

Saiyad Fakhr-ud-dīn, the eldest son, was in possession when the British rule was established, and received a settlement of the estate at the time of the Permanent Settlement. He built a house for himself at Khagrā and a stronghold at Asuragarh 12 miles to the south. On his death the property was divided between his two sons, Saiyad Akbar Husain and Saiyad Didar Husain, of whom the former removed to Kishanganj and married Zahūrunnissa, the daughter of a petty *milikdār* of Alīganj in this district. Akbar Husain died childless, and his widow succeeded to the property, which she made over to her brother, Saiyad Husain Razā, whose descendants are still living at Kishanganj being known as the Kishanganj branch of the family. The Khagrā branch are descended from Didar Husain, who left five sons, of whom four died without issue. The fifth, Saiyad Ināyat Husain, succeeded to the property, and rendered good service during the Mutiny of 1857 and the Bhutān war of 1864. He was succeeded by Saiyad Atā Husain, who married the daughter of the Nawāb of Murshidābād and in 1887 was granted the title of Nawāb in consideration of his ancient lineage, loyalty and public spirit. He died in 1892, leaving two minor sons, Saiyad Mohi-ud-dīn Husain Mirza and Saiyad Moin-ud-dīn Husain Mirza, and a widow Shahar Bano Begam *alias* Safri Begam. The estate was then taken under the management of the Court of Wards and remained in its charge till 1906. The widow of Nawāb Atā Husain Khān now owns six-twentieths and each of his sons seven-twentieths of the estate.

Kishanganj.—The headquarters of the Kishanganj subdivision, situated on the Ganges-Darjeeling road a little distance east of the Mahānandā river. Population (1901) 7,671. The public offices were formerly situated four miles north-west of the town at a place called Bhariādāngi, but have recently been removed to Deomaria, a quarter of the town adjoining the railway station. The latter is the terminus of a branch

line of the Eastern Bengal State Railway running from Bārsoi junction, which it is proposed to extend northwards to the Jalpāiguri district. The town is a straggling one, the area within municipal limits being five square miles. For elective purposes it is divided into four wards, viz., (1) Kutubganj, (2) Kishanganj and Line Kishanganj, (3) Tegharīā, Sundarian, Dilāwarganj and Dharamganj, and (4) Dumaria, Ruidhāsa and Khagrā. The first and fourth wards elect four and two commissioners respectively, and the second and third one commissioner each. The town contains a large inspection bungalow, a dispensary, a thāna and the headquarters offices of the Khagrā Estate (*q. v.*). The place is rapidly growing into importance owing to the development of the jute trade, several Mārwāri firms being established in it. Saiyad Dilāwar Razā of the Kishanganj branch of the Khagrā family, an account of which will be found in the article on the Sūrjyapur *pargana*, has a substantial house here, called after him Dilāwarganj. Cart-wheels are largely manufactured in the neighbouring village of Chaklā, which are used throughout the district and are also exported.

Kishanganj Subdivision.—North-eastern subdivision of the district, lying between 25° 54′ and 26° 35′ N. and between 87° 37′ and 88° 32′E., with an area of 1,346 square miles. It is bounded on the east by the districts of Dinājpur and Jalpāigurī, the boundary throughout almost its whole length following the bed of two rivers, the Nāgar and the Kanta (Thopa); on the north by Nepāl and the Kurseong subdivision of the Darjeeling district; on the west by the Arāriā subdivision; and on the south and south-west by the Purnea subdivision. It consists of a fertile alluvial tract, watered by two great rivers, the Mahānandā and the Kānkai, and by their tributaries. These rivers run from north to south, and in the rains fairly big boats come up the Mahānandā as far as Kishanganj. The beds of both rivers, however, are shallow, and the volume of water brought down from the hills floods the surrounding low country during the rains. Of late years the Kānkai has appreciably shifted its bed at a point just above Bahādurganj and has flowed through new country to the east of the old stream. By far the greater portion of the land is under jute and paddy, but there is an appreciable amount under thatching grass and *rabi* crops. Along the banks of the Dānk river, and in the north of the subdivision, there is a considerable area of jungle, which harbours wild pig and a few leopards.

The population was 619,476 in 1901 as against 651,039 in 1891, and the subdivision, which is the most fertile portion of the

district, is more densely populated than the rest of Purnea, having 460 persons to the square mile. It is more nearly allied to the neighbouring districts of Northern Bengal than to Bihār, and the bulk of the inhabitants are of Rājbansi or Koch origin, though most of them are now converts to Islām. It contains one town, Kishanganj, its headquarters, and 1,227 villages. The chief markets are at Kishanganj town, Phulberiā, Bibīganj, Gandharbdānga and Islāmpur. For administrative purposes the subdivision is divided into 3 thānas, viz., (1) Bahādurganj, with the Digalbānk outpost; (2) Islāmpur with the Chaprā and Thākurganj outposts; and (3) Kishanganj with the Goālpokhar outpost.

Māmu Bhāgina Ail.—An embankment which runs across-country, near the south of *pargana* Sūrjyapur in the Kishanganj subdivision, from Nekmard in Dinājpur. Legend relates that it was constructed by an uncle and his nephew, rival suitors for the hand of a lady, who lived at the village of Angorbāsā. The suitors lived about 30 miles away in opposite directions, and to win the lady's favour, they each tried to erect a causeway so as to come to her house by a road untrodden before by any feet. One form of the legend says that both arrived at the same time, having finished the roads by supernatural assistance in a single night; and the lady, unable to decide between them, committed suicide. Another, and a more likely version, is that the process of road-making proved so slow that the lady got tired of waiting and when at last the uncle and nephew arrived, they were only in time to assist at the celebration of her nuptials with a third and more favoured suitor. There is a similar legend about a sort of embankment traceable at intervals on the left bank of the Mahānandā between Titālya and Sonāpur some 50 miles further north. A very conspicuous mound still exists there, which is said to have been the site of the lady's palace. Another story is that *pargana* Sūrjyapur was enclosed on the north and south by huge outworks built for defensive purposes. The present boundary of Sūrjyapur, however, lies far south of the *Māmu Bhāgina Ail.* The embankment bears a strong resemblance to the Bīr Bāndh in North Bhāgalpur, but its site and direction negative the idea that it was a defensive work against fluvial action, and more probably it was a line of defence against the hillmen.*

Manihāri.—A village in the south of the district situated in the south of the Purnea subdivision on the Ganges. Population (1901) 3,759. It is a terminus of the Bihār section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway, and is connected by a ferry steamer with

* J. Byrne, *Purnea Settlement Report*, 1908.

the East Indian Railway station at Sakrigāli Ghāt. It is also a place of call for river steamers. Large gatherings are held here on the occasion of solar or lunar eclipses, when people come even from Nepāl to bathe in the Ganges. A large fair is held here in connexion with the *Bāruni Gangā* festival (March-April) and there are smaller fairs on *Kārtik Pūrnimā* (November) and *Sivarātri* (February).

Morang or Murang.—An old name for the Nepāl Tarai lying north of the district. The name is an old one, being mentioned more than once in the *Alamgirnāmah* and in the annals of the Koch kings. It is shown in Van den Broucke's map as comprising the whole Himālayan tract from Bihār to Assam; and in Rennell's Map of 1779 the Nepāl Tarai between Muzaffarpur and Jalpāigurī is entered under this name.

Nawābganj.—A village in the south of the Purnea subdivision situated 34 miles from Purnea town, and 12 miles from the banks of the Ganges, opposite Sāhibganj. The local tradition regarding its foundation is that on one occasion a quantity of treasure, while being sent from Purnea to Rājmahāl, the seat of Government in the later Musalmān times, was plundered by a band of robbers near the site of the present village, which was then a waste jungle. The Nawāb was unable to detect the robbers and, in order to protect the route, determined to establish a village on the spot. A proclamation was made that any criminals who would settle and live there would be pardoned. People of this description took advantage of such a simple condition of amnesty, and flocked in from all quarters. The village grew in importance, and was called Nawābganj after its founder. It contains an old fort in ruins, with an area of about 80 acres. At Baldiābāri, about a mile and a half from Nawābganj, was fought the battle between Shaukat Jang and Sirāj-ud-daula, which has been already described. Nawābganj is considered to include the village of Bāghmārā, which lies a mile distant.

Purnea.—Headquarters of the district situated in 25° 46′ N. and 87° 28′ E. on the east bank of the Saurā river. It was formerly the headquarters of the Muhammadan Governors of Purnea, but little trace of their rule is now left beyond the ruins of old houses and mosques, and the names of old quarters of the town, such as Miyabazar, Khalifa Chauk and Abdullanagar to the north, and Begam Deuri, Lāl Bāgh and Khuskibāgh to the east. The *Riyāzu-s-Salātin* also mentions a fort and a masonry building, called the Lālbāgh, as in existence in 1788. After the establishment of British rule Purnea was made the headquarters station of the district about the year 1771. The first detailed

account of it was given by Buchanan Hamilton (*cir.* 1807), according to whose account the town extended over 9 square miles—"a space equal to more than half of London;" but, he added, "it most assuredly does not contain 50,000 people, though it is one of the best country towns in Bengal." The town proper had an area of about 3 square miles. The largest and most compact part of it lay to the east of the Saurā river and had one wide and tolerably straight street about half a mile long from east to west. Near it was the suburb of Miyabazar and to the south a detached suburb called Abdullanagar. On the opposite side of the Saurā was Mahārājganj, a large but poor suburb, which extended south to Rāmbāgh, an arid sandy plain, on which the houses of the Europeans, the Courts of Justice and the Collector's offices had been built. Rāmbāgh was hemmed in by the marshy channels of the Saurā and Burhī Kosi (*i.e.*, the Kālā Kosi), and beyond the latter were the lines in which the provincial corps was stationed.

The limits of the area now within municipal limits differ very much from those of Purnea town in Dr. Buchanan Hamilton's time. Still a fair comparison may be made. The old town area remains intact, measuring 3½ miles in length by one mile in width. The old civil station of Rāmbāgh, formerly a western suburb, now lies in the centre of the municipality. The large suburbs towards the north, viz., Miyabazar, Khalifa Chauk, and part of Abdullanagar, and, on the east, Begam Deuri, parts of Lālbāgh, and Khuskibāgh have been lost; but the still larger space included in the new civil station, including Madhubanī, Khazānchi Hāt, Kālīganj, Raghunāthpur, Walitolā and Bhattā, has been added. The area within municipal limits is now not less than 12½ square miles. The population of the town was 14,007 in 1901, but it has steadily decreased since 1872 when it was 16,057.

The decline of the town within the last century is attributed to the unhealthiness of the climate, due to the formation of the Saurā marshes and to the silting up and stagnation of the river Kālā Kosi. Purnea seems to have been chosen as the seat of the Muhammadan government of the district at a time when this river was the main channel of the Kosi. As the Kosi worked westward, it gave place to a chain of marshes separated by low strips of land, but flooded in the rains and forming at that season a continuous waterway. About the time of the English occupation, this change seems to have been going on, but was not yet complete. The main stream had been diverted, but enough still remained in the Kālā Kosi to keep deep water in the swamps, which consequently did not shelter malaria-bearing mosquitoes as

shallow lands do. The Saurā also was a larger river than it is at the present day; and the old records, while occasionally mentioning epidemics in the low tract to the south and east, make no reference to the headquarters town as being remarkably unhealthy.

The space between these two rivers, which was known as Rāmbāgh, although not so high as the country farther to the west, where the military lines stood, was chosen as the civil station on account of its proximity to the native town, which then lay entirely to the east of the Saurā. A more unfortunate choice could scarcely have been made. By 1815 the civil station had become so unhealthy that the Government considered that the removal of the headquarters to some other place was unavoidable, and the acting Magistrate recommended that it should be located at Jalālgarh. Nothing, however, appears to have been done, and the station became more and more unhealthy. A road from the military lines to the civil station, in which sufficient waterway was not allowed, prevented drainage, and added to the prevailing malaria. The old graveyard, situated in one of the gloomiest spots in the neighbourhood, on a narrow tongue of land surrounded by perennial swamps, shows how great must have been the mortality of the European residents during the second quarter of the century.

About 1835 it was determined to remove the Government offices to the higher country towards the west; and a site was chosen nearly two miles beyond the military lines, which had themselves shared to some extent in the general unhealthiness. After this change there was an appreciable improvement in the health of the officials and other residents, but Purnea long continued a very unpopular station. It still has a season of unhealthiness for Europeans, the months of September and October, at the close of the rains, when but all acclimatized residents are liable to attacks of fever. The native town of Purnea, which has remained in its old position, is still more subject to outbreaks of fever, which pass into severe epidemics. The Saurā marshes still remain undrained. An embankment has been constructed to resist floods in the Kālā Kosi and Saurā, but it also acts as a barrier to surface drainage into both these rivers. Moreover, while it is valuable in withstanding serious inundations, its construction is not sufficiently solid to prevent subsoil percolation. The marshes are in this way fed at all seasons and continue to be sources of malarial disease.

The town is long and straggling, and contains five distinct localities, viz., the town proper, the civil station, Khazānchi Hāt,

Bhattā and Madhubanī. The old town is situated on the left bank of the river Saurā and is connected with the civil station by a small bridge built by Bābu Mahesh Lāl and Bābu Nackched Lāl, bankers and merchants of Purnea. From it a road runs for about 2 miles south to Khazānchi Hāt, a quarter which is chiefly inhabited by Muhammadans. To the south it is conterminous with Bhattā, which is inhabited by Bengali pleaders, clerks and well-to-do Bihāris. To the west, beyond the Darjeeling road, is Madhubanī with a small bazar and a municipal market. A beautiful view of the Himālayas on the distant horizon may be obtained from Purnea. The panorama is described as being exceedingly fine; and it is said that, though the view is inferior to that obtained at Darjeeling, the breadth of the range visible from Purnea is greater.

The buildings of Purnea are of little interest. It contains the usual public offices of a district headquarters, a large dispensary, a Lady Dufferin hospital, a High school and two churches. The most curious fact connected with the town is that it has four Christian cemeteries, the Roman and English churches each having two. Two are in the former civil lines, and two in the present station. None of them contain monuments of conspicuous interest.

Purnea Subdivision.—Headquarters subdivision of the district, lying between 25° 15′ and 26° 7′ N. and between 87° 0′ and 87° 56′ E. with an area of 2,571 square miles. It comprises the southern protion of the district, and is bounded on the east by Mālda and Dinājpur, being separated from the latter by the Nāgar river; on the west by the Madhipurā subdivision of Bhāgalpur; on the south by the river Ganges, which separates it from Bhāgalpur and the Santāl Parganas; and on the north by the Arāriā and Kishanganj subdivisions. The whole tract west of Purnea is liable to inundation by the Kosi, a river with a very rapid current and an ill-defined channel. In Muhammadan times the river, or at any rate an important branch of it, flowed under the walls of Purnea city, but since that period the river has shifted westward and the main stream has encroached on the Bhāgalpur district. The tract which has suffered from its vagaries is now covered with infertile sand, which when cultivated yields only light crops. The greater part is left under pasturage, while everywhere *jhils* and depressions are found, which mark former channels of the river. This sandy tract continues to within a few miles east of Purnea, where the Panār is reached. The country east of the latter river, which is watered by the Panār, the Kankai, and the Mahānandā, is more fertile, but is also liable to inundations from the overflow of those rivers.

The population was 838,333 in 1901 as against 861,194 in 1891, the decrease being due to general unhealthiness and to a serious epidemic of cholera which took place in 1900. It is the most sparsely populated subdivision in North Bihār, the population numbering only 326 to the square mile. It contains 1,528 villages and two towns, viz., Purnea, its headquarters, and the important railway junction of Katihār. The chief markets are at Purnea, Katihār, Kasbā, Phulberiā, Ichamatī and Bārsoi, and a fair of long standing is held at Kārāgolà. For administrative purposes it is divided into seven thānas, viz., Amur (or Kasbā Amur), Damdahā, Gopālpur, Kadwā, Katihār, Korhā and Purnea.

Rānīganj.—A village in the Araria subdivision, situated 16 miles due west of Basantpur and 30 miles north-west of Purnea. It contains a police thāna and was formerly a municipal union under Act XX of 1856.

Saifganj.—*See* Katihār.

Satligarh.—*See* Dharāra.

Sūrjyapur Pargana.—A *pargana* in the north-east of the district, extending over 729 square miles. As related in the article on the Khagrā estate, this *pargana* was held by Saiyad Fakhr-ud-dīn Husain at the time of the Permanent Settlement, when it was assessed to a revenue of Rs. 2,46,226. On his death, it was divided between Didar Husain and Akbar Husain, the former making his headquarters at Kishanganj, while his brother remained at Khagrā. Their descendants are known as the Kishanganj and Khagrā branches respectively. A sketch of the history of the latter has been given in the article on the Khagrā Estate, and it will be necessary therefore to deal only with the Kishanganj branch. Akbar Husain having died childless, his widow Bibī Zahūrunnissa succeeded to the property, which she left to her brother Husain Razā, a petty *milikdār* of Alīganj in this district. His grandsons were Saiyād Asghar Razā Khān Bahādur and Saiyād Dilāwar Razā, during whose minority the estate was managed by the Court of Wards from 1874 to 1883. It was then released with a rent-roll of over two lakhs, but the heirs subsequently lost most of their property. In 1883 the heirs of Nawāb Saiyād Lutf Alī Khān acquired for Rs. 8,96,000 a share of two annas 6 *gandās* odd in the property; the rent roll of this share is now about 2¼ lakhs. In 1897 Bābu Dharam Chānd Lāl, father of Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl, bought by private treaty Saiyād Dilāwar Razā's entire interest of 2 annas 16 *gandas* for Rs. 5,12,000 and a perpetual annuity of Rs 2,000 per month. Saiyād Asghar Razā had an equal share, of which a portion representing 2 annas 11 *gandās* was bought at an auction sale in

1900 for Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl, then a minor, for Rs. 6,50,000. The remaining share of 4 *gandās* odd was also sold by auction, and the purchaser sold it to Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl in 1907 for Rs. 30,000.

The *pargana* is now divided as follows. The representatives of the Khagrā estate are now proprietors of a separate account of a little over 8 annas of the estate. Bābu Prithi Chānd Lāl is the proprietor of $5\frac{3}{4}$ annas; and the heirs of Nawāb Sayad Lutf Alī Khān of Patna have a separate account of $2\frac{1}{4}$ annas.

Thākurganj.—A village in the extreme north of the district, a few miles north-west of Kāliāganj on the Burhīgangā river. It contains a police outpost and is said to have been the site of the residence of a Rājā Virāt, whose territory lay along the east of the Kosi, and included the adjoining country as far as Rangpur and Dinājpur. Of this Rājā Virāt it is related that he gave shelter to Yudhisthira and his four brothers, the chiefs of the Pāndavas, during their 12 years' exile. At the time of the trigonometrical survey some stones with inscription were dug up here by the surveyors, which the villagers declared were the remains of Virāt's palace.

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